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POLITICS AND HISTORY BOOKS

Give us this day our daily dead

Eamonn McCann: Ireland on the brink

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Before they're roasted in garlic and rosemary they're soaked in urine and excrement.

The trucks that carry livestock across Europe hold up to 800 sheep at a time.

The journeys can last over twenty-four hours, but the animals' bladders cannot. They begin to urinate and excrete inside the lorry.

One sheep produces around a litre of urine and 700 grammes of faeces a day.

And so do the other 799.

Since they are trapped in such a confined space their fleeces quickly become coated in droppings.

For the rest of the trip they're wet, cold and some even suffer skin burns.

Eventually the urinating stops, but only because the animals are given no water in transit.

The size of Continental trucks means that unfamiliar flocks are often mixed together (an unsettling experience for any animal).

In the crush the weaker sheep lose their footing, fall to the floor and are trampled by the others.

Some die.

And all this happens so European meat traders can squeeze a little more profit from their livestock.

The sheep could be slaughtered close to their farms, refrigerated and then transported (a method favoured by many farmers).

But offal and hides fetch a slightly higher price abroad and freshly killed meat is also at a premium, so the practice continues.

At least until the law is changed.

EC agriculture ministers are about to meet to discuss livestock transportation regulations.

The RSPCA want to see an eight hour limit on the transportation of live animals for slaughter enforced immediately across the European Community.

Britain's representative at the negotiations is Gillian Shephard and there's still time to let her know your views on the crucial issue of maximum journey time.

Which is why we need your help.

Please phone the number below for a free RSPCA information pack and to find out what further action you can take.

Perhaps we can then persuade Mrs Shephard to look after our sheep.

RSPCA
REG. CHARITY 219099

STOP THE NEEDLESS TRANSPORTATION OF ANIMALS. PHONE 0500 34 35 36.

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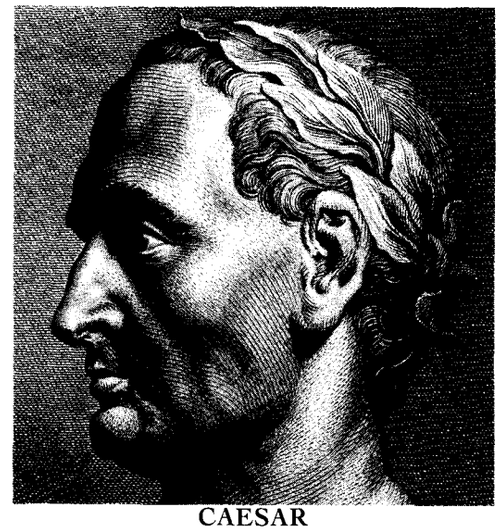
Some of the famous names who've drawn our maps for us.

GENGHIS KHAN



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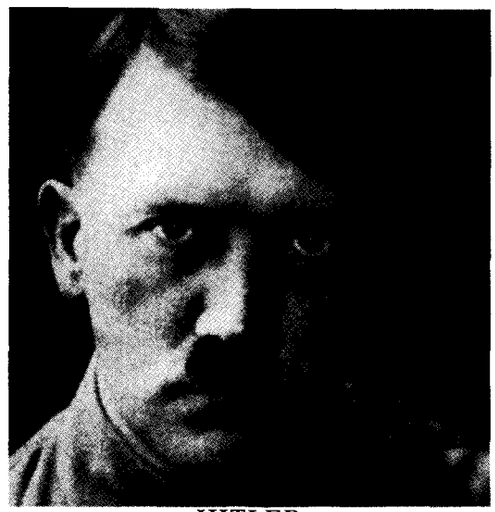

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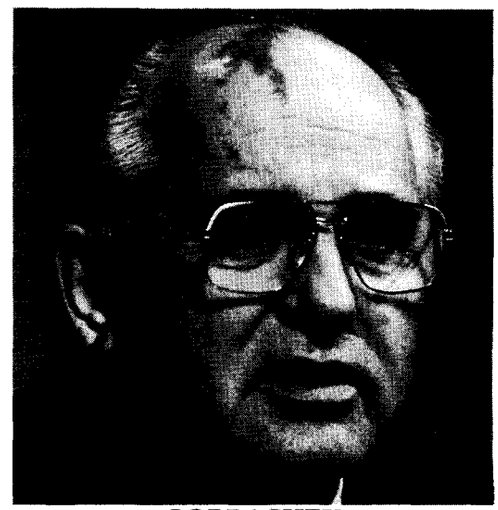
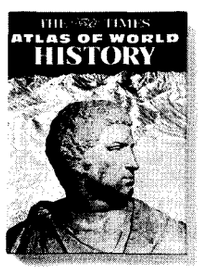


GORBACHEV

Genghis Khan used sabres, Hitler 70mm shells. Both made an indelible impact on the worlds of their time.



The new 4th edition of The Times Atlas of World History recreates the events with vivid maps and diagrams and analyses them in expert commentaries.

Inside you'll find all major military, political and social changes, from the very beginnings of history right up to the start of this current decade.

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Andrzej Krauze

Clinton's poor start

Bill Clinton was elected a year ago promising to be a president who concentrated his efforts not on foreign affairs but on changing America for the better. There were some sound political reasons for this: George Bush was widely perceived by voters as having spent too much energy on faraway countries and having neglected the domestic front, particularly the economy. But Clinton's ordering of priorities was also a reflection of his own inadequacies: put brutally, he did not, and does not, know very much about the world beyond his own backyard.

So far, his administration's foreign policy has been marked by quite extraordinary inconsistency. On Somalia, where he inherited Bush's ill-advised military intervention, he has veered between backing escalation of US involvement and seeming to want to pull out as soon as possible. On Bosnia, the administration started off promising military intervention and cajoling the reluctant British and French to back its approach—only to end up effectively spurning any role. A similar confection of bluster and inaction seems to be the name of the game with Haiti.

The problem is not, however, simply with the spectacular international crises that make it on to the television screens. Clinton has proved just as inept on Cuba, hinting that he might reconsider the blockade and then announcing that it would stay. He has faced both ways on China, attacking its appalling human- rights record and then upgrading US contacts with Beijing. Perhaps more important in the long run, no coherent policy has emerged on relations with Europe or the Pacific Rim countries, on world trade or on nuclear weapons. America has had little or nothing to do with the Israel-PLO peace process and appears confused about what it wants in the Middle East. Just about the only decisive and effective action by Clinton in the foreign arena was his rapid endorsement of Boris Yeltsin's seizure of power in Russia—and that could all too easily turn out to have been a giant mistake.

The mess is not entirely Clinton's fault: he has been badly advised, particularly by his Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, a veteran of the Carter administration who has plenty of experience, but entirely lacks the vision required to steer the sole superpower in the post-cold war era. Nevertheless, the buck stops with Bill—and he needs to start thinking a lot more clearly about the goals of American foreign policy if his administration is not to go down in the history books as a disaster. What the world needs is a US that is neither isolationist in the traditional sense nor the world's policeman—not a US that one minute seems to want to retreat into its shell and at the next intervenes unilaterally and incompetently in some crisis or another.

At home, the picture for Clinton is different—but not so different. All the indicators suggest that the American economy is at last making a strong recovery from recession. But it is doubtful whether this has anything to do with "Clintonomics", that familiar mix of austerity budgets, continental free trade and "supply-side" intervention.

Certainly, the idea of making training the central focus of economic policy, so much admired by the Labour Party here in Britain, looks increasingly threadbare. According to the current issue of the *Nation*, the New York left weekly, a Labor Department report last month assessing a $200 million-a-year scheme for retraining manufacturing workers who had lost their jobs to foreign competition "concluded that only 19 per cent of the 'retrained' workers found jobs that demanded their new skills and paid at least 80 per cent of their former wages; 20 per cent remained jobless; most of the rest sank into low-wage slots that they occupied for just eight months."

And if retraining doesn't work, isn't the North American Free Trade Agreement simply a mechanism for exporting employment to Mexico? It is no surprise that the administration is currently engaged in the mother of all battles with Congress over NAFTA, with Clinton's political credibility on the line if he loses.

Apart from the economy, Clinton's main domestic policy plank was a promise to reform America's creaking health and welfare regimes, starting with health. Here too, however, the signs are less than promising. The health package launched by Hillary Clinton in September is unlikely to provide the comprehensive, accessible service that the country so badly needs, and there are no indications that the welfare reforms now being considered by the administration will do anything other than penalise the poor for the economy's failure to generate jobs.

Clinton's honeymoon with the electorate has been deservedly brief: the defeats suffered by the Democrats in New York and elsewhere this week are a taste of worse to come in the mid-term Congressional elections this time next year unless the administration pulls its socks up—and fast. This side of the Atlantic, those Labour politicians who celebrated Clinton's victory last year with champagne at a swanky London hotel have been remarkably silent about their erstwhile hero. One hopes that the silence does not mean that Britain's Clintonmaniacs are not having second thoughts.

Trouble getting NSS?

NSS should be on sale in most medium and large newsagents, and in many smaller shops. In particular, W H Smith and Menzies should stock us. If there is a shop near you that you think ought to sell the magazine, but does not, please ring Pat Coyne on 071-739 3211, or write to NSS Freepost, London E2

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Pollwatch

Organisation	Pub date	Sample	Con %	Lab %	Lib Dems %	Other %
Gallup/Daily Telegraph	4 Oct	1,042	23 (25.5)	44.5 (46.5)	27 (23)	5.5 (5)
Gallup 9000/ Daily Telegraph	4 Oct	10,736	24.3 (23.7)	45 (42.9)	24.7 (28.3)	6 (5.1)
ICM/Guardian	13 Oct	1,391	31 (27)	46 (45)	19 (24)	4 (5)
MORI/Times	29 Oct	1,795	29 (28)	45 (43)	23 (27)	n/a

The previous month's polls are given in brackets

Now that the party conference season is over, John Smith has emerged as the winner with voters. His showdown with the unions over one member, one vote has given him a shot in the arm in October's polls. All the stomach-churning anxiety in his camp as they waited to see whether the MSF would switch sides has turned out to be worth it. A MORI poll for the *Times*, conducted a few weeks after the Labour conference, reveals a big rise in his satisfaction ratings from 34 to 41 per cent, his highest level yet.

The Labour Party as a whole has not benefited much. ICM's poll for the *Guardian* on 13 October shows that only 15 per cent of people think they are more likely (and 4 per cent less likely) to vote Labour as a result of Omov. Women, in particular, seem remarkably unbothered. Nevertheless, Labour has maintained a healthy post-conference lead of 15-16 points over the Conservatives.

The Liberal Democrats could do with a by-election or two. They were all but forgotten during the summer recess and their party conference was overshadowed by events in Moscow. In ICM's poll, they slipped back to 19 per cent, 12 points behind the Tories. But in MORI's more recent poll, they are only 6 points behind.

The ICM poll, for which sampling was conducted shortly after the Tory party conference, shows the biggest boost in the Conservatives' standing. The mock unity, the attacks on foreigners and the hard line on law and order lifted the Tories above 30 per cent for the first time in months. John Major's personal ratings also climbed from a derisory 19 to 23 per cent. Later, MORI came up with the same figure for Major, but found only 27 per cent support for the Tories as a whole.

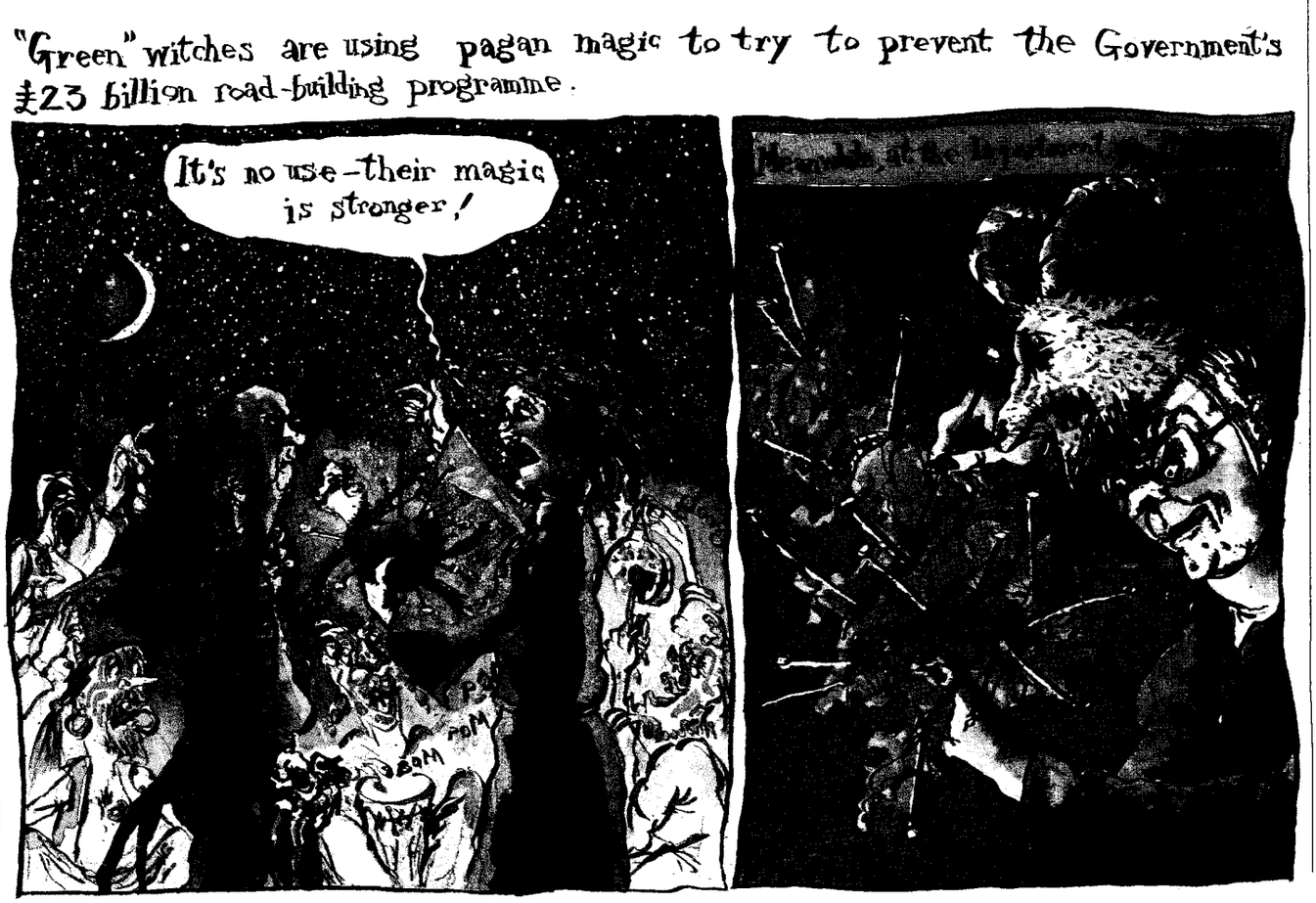
Even at the height of the government's unpopularity, just before the Blackpool conference, Gallup found that 78 per cent of Conservatives wanted Major to carry on as Prime Minister. No less significantly, 40 per cent of all voters—and 70 per cent of Conservatives—blamed Major's critics for "constant sniping at him". Only 37 per cent (13 per cent of Tories) blamed "the poor quality of his leadership".

But, then, according to Gallup, Major is one of the few members of the cabinet recognised by voters. In an "identity parade" poll, published in the *Telegraph* on 5 October, Peter Lilley emerged as the most faceless of all, prompting his conference joke about being "fatherless" as well. Before his speech, he was recognised by just 11 per cent of the electorate (admittedly double the percentage who knew who he was last year).

Ken Clarke was recognised by only 61 per cent of voters; and many people confused Gillian Shephard with Edwina Currie. By contrast, 97 per cent of people correctly identified Major, but that was 1 per cent fewer than the year before.

MORI's poll for the *Times* on 28 October shows that the rows over Maastricht have had a damaging effect on support for Britain's membership of the European Community (or Union, as the federalists now call it). An astonishing 46 per cent told MORI they would now vote for Britain to leave the EC. Three years ago, when Britain joined the ERM, only 32 per cent supported Britain's withdrawal. Pro-EC, but anti-federalist, Eurosceptics have been playing with fire.

FELIX BENNETT


"Green" witches are using pagan magic to try to prevent the Government's £23 billion road-building programme.
It's no use – their magic is stronger!

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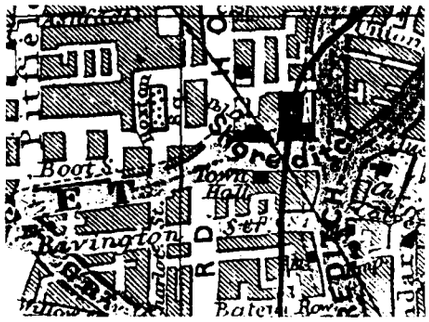
Boots
Town Hall
Bethnal Green
Bethnal Green Rd
Bethnal Green Tube
Bethnal Green Gardens
Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood
Bethnal Green Museum of Natural History
Bethnal Green Police Station
Bethnal Green Library
Bethnal Green Hospital
Bethnal Green Nature Reserve
Bethnal Green Working Men's Club
Bethnal Green Baptist Church
Bethnal Green Methodist Church
Bethnal Green Synagogue
Bethnal Green Mosque
Bethnal Green Cemetery
Bethnal Green Allotments
Bethnal Green Recreation Ground
Bethnal Green Sports Ground
Bethnal Green Swimming Pool
Bethnal Green Tennis Courts
Bethnal Green Bowling Green
Bethnal Green Cricket Ground
Bethnal Green Football Ground
Bethnal Green Rugby Ground
Bethnal Green Hockey Ground
Bethnal Green Athletics Track
Bethnal Green Golf Course
Bethnal Green Driving Range
Bethnal Green Pitch and Putt
Bethnal Green Crazy Golf
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Bethnal Green Ice Rink
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Bethnal Green Newsagent
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Bethnal Green Cross-Cultural Dancing Fusion Dancing

It truly is the end of an era: the women of Greenham are calling it a day. "This is obviously an awesome and very painful decision to have to make," the final missive from the camps at Blue and Green Gates states. Now there are no missiles left at RAF Greenham Common, the task of mustering up enough women to keep the camps going, both sited at entrances to the airbase, is becoming too difficult. But the Greenham Wimmin (which, Shoreditch would like to make clear, is what they call themselves) are going out in style. Their final tour of duty will be at the end of the month, when all are invited to join in the final celebrations. Shoreditch is sorely tempted by the invitation, which promises plenty of classic wimmin's entertainments. "Bring your own boltcutters and take the fence down", and "Come share the biggest steam pudding cooked in the open by wimmin", are just two of the party games on offer. Well, it beats pass-the-parcel. All interested women, and wimmin, should head for Blue Gate Camp, Bury's Bank Road, Newbury, Berkshire, on Saturday 27 November. And don't forget the boltcutters.

Shoreditch was sure that one safe haven from the Thatchermania curently sweeping the nation's bookshops and television screens would be *Tribune*'s annual fundraising dinner last week. But there was no escape; the prize in the after-dinner auction was, yes, a copy of *The Downing Street Years*. The hefty doorstop raised £600 from the assembled left-wingers, who had already paid £45 each for the pleasure of eating roast duck in the presence of assorted Labour luminaries, and to hear John Mortimer, Ann Clwyd and Michael Cashman do their post-prandial turns. The reason for the eagerness to acquire a copy of Maggie's ramblings was the inscription in the front. Michael Foot, of whom she writes "If I did not think it would offend him, I would say he was a gentleman", had written: "If I thought it was true, I would say she was a lady." Quite a collectors' item.

The Labour Party's Scottish executive has upped the ante in the row over positive discrimination. It has proposed that all-women shortlists be introduced in 100 per cent of all the winnable seats north of the border that fall vacant. Scottish MPs —who, with honourable exceptions, are some of the biggest male chauvinists in the party—are horrified. Labour's NEC, which is already distinctly nervous about the 50 per cent rule applying to the rest of the country, are expected to block this idea at the earliest opportunity. But is the proposal quite as drastic as it seems? At most, there are only going to be four or five seats in Scotland that turn out to be vacant and winnable. At the moment, there are only three Scottish women MPs out of 49 (not two, as NSS suggested last week). So the men are complaining about women increasing their numbers to just seven or eight.

One adjective Shoreditch would never have applied to the *Spectator* is "squeamish". Yet what else are we to make of the magazine's refusal to publish a certain full-page advertisement for lamb from the RSPCA in its food 'n' drinks special issue this week? "Before they're roasted in garlic and rosemary they're soaked in urine and excrement," says the ad's headline. Apparently, one sheep "produces around a litre of urine and 700 grammes of faeces a day" while it's being transported, along with 799 others packed for over 24 hours in the same lorry. "In the crush the weaker sheep lose their footing, fall to the floor and are trampled by others." The RSPCA is campaigning for an eight-hour maximum for such journeys, and points out that: "There's still time to let Gillian Shephard know your views." Someone at the *Spectator* thought this was all rather bad taste, although how they know about the taste provides an interesting glimpse into the lives of the upper classes. *NSS*, naturally, is made of sterner stuff, and you can read the whole ad on page two.

Brent, the London borough that has never been barmier since the Conservatives won control with the help of Labour defectors, has been at it again. The local authority had been nursing high hopes of winning further European Community funding for itself, and so an all-party group of delegates trouped off to Strasbourg to make an especially good impression at a meeting of the Council for European Municipalities last week. But it seems they forgot to leave Brent's mayor, Tory councillor Arthur Steel, at home. Steel's contribution to the meeting included an attack on "foreigners who come to Britain to scrounge off the benefits system, single mothers who can't get on with their parents and become a burden on the state". Cllr Steel then went on to compare Gypsies with "hordes of locusts who invade and ruin an area". Labour delegates could only cringe in their seats with embarrassment during the Le Pen-style outburst, which prompted demands from some of the other 2,000 delegates present for Steel's microphone to be turned off. Some council members are now fuming that Steel may have put the kibosh on the borough's chances of new Euro-funding. "It's not exactly the best way to influence people we're trying to get money off," Labour group leader Paul Dailsey tells Shoreditch.

FOURTH ESTATE

A regular monitor of the tabloid press

28 October: There is universal tabloid outrage at Gerry Adams' appearance as pall-bearer at the funeral of Thomas Begley, the IRA fish-shop bomber. "YOU BLOODY HYPOCRITE," screams the *Mirror* front page; "Gerry Adams: the two worst words in the English language" echoes the *Sun*.

29 October: Who said that investigative journalism was dead? The *Sun* reveals "PADDY'S TWO FREE MOTORS": "The Liberal Democrat leader crunched a top-of-the range £19,000 Rover 620 GSi only 24 hours after it was handed to him. But not to worry—he still has the FREE £26,000 Peugeot 605 in the garage back home." And the *Mirror* exposes the scandalous truth behind *Have I Got News For You*. Far from being spontaneous, the show is scripted and researched. Meanwhile, without a hint of irony, the *Daily Star* declares: "Home Secretary Michael Howard is a sensible man. He listens to the *Daily Star*."

30 October: The *Mirror* returns to Northern Ireland with a large picture of Adams as a member of the honour guard at a 1973 IRA funeral. But otherwise it's class envy time. "FURY OVER MPS' NEW PAY DEAL," storms the *Mail* front page over a report on the £16 a week rise that MPs have awarded themselves for next year.

31 October: Only the *Mail on Sunday* and the *Sunday Mirror* reckon that the massacre in Greysteel is worthy of a front-page lead. For the *Sunday Express*, the big story is Princess Di's alleged desire to get back with Charles; for the *People*, it's footballer Pat Van Den Hauwe's boozing (he's the one married to model Mandy Smith); and for the *News of the World* it's footballer Mickey Thomas's champagne-swigging in prison (where he's doing a stretch for passing dodgy banknotes). Well, you have to keep things in perspective, don't you?

1 November: By now, everyone has caught up with the importance of Greysteel—but there's no agreement about what to do about it. The *Mail* calls for internment; the *Express* advises against it. Alone among the tabloids, *Today* argues that John Major should have talks with John Hume.

2 November: It's the *Mirror*'s 90th birthday, which it celebrates in characteristically modest style: "We are more sprightly, agile and alert than we were in our youth." Elsewhere, there's just one story as Ireland melts away from the front pages: the trial of the two boys accused of murdering Jamie Bulger—except, that is, for the *Sun*, which can't resist a dig at its elderly rival. According to its "official computer projection" of the *Mirror*'s circulation decline since 1969, "there will be only one copy sold on May 8, 2024".

3 November: *Today* exclusive: the Queen mum is "not immune to flu".

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A few years ago, reports that the government was about to make substantial cuts in inner-city school funding might have provoked an instant political crisis. The opposition would have denounced the reductions. Ministers would have claimed that it was all a matter of malicious speculation. There would have been protests and demonstrations.

Cuts of this kind now seem likely, as a new form of central funding for education is introduced, which means deprived inner-city schools will lose out severely. If these measures are announced, I doubt whether opponents will take the trouble to mount a serious protest, when they look at the fate of similar efforts in recent years. A year or so on, the public marches against the pit closures, those protests by middle-class shire residents and Tory MPs, Anne Scargill's sit-in down the Parkside colliery in Merseyside, that were so stirring at the time, now just seem pathetic. The protesters may have been well intentioned, but we can now see that they were gulled, and the apparent concessions were illusory. It would need a Karl Marx—the man whose ideas are apparently of no further use—to explain why a protest against pit closures, in this whole rigged system, would be useless. Even the Groucho Marx of *Duck Soup* would be some use, as the president who is informed that the workers of Freedonia are demanding shorter hours: "Very well, we'll give them shorter hours. We'll start by cutting their lunch hour to 20 minutes."

A brief front-page report in last Sunday's *Observer* by the paper's education correspondent, Barry Hugill, suggested that the implications for the government could be damaging, and that "senior London Tories fear 'wipe-out' at next year's local government elections". Maybe they do. I'm sure that the Conservatives would rather win the seats than lose them. On the other hand, there are prices the government may consider to be not worth paying, just to preserve a presence in our large metropolitan centres. Recently there has been some evidence that increased spending in deprived areas leads quickly and directly to an improvement in GCSE results, but what's the point of redistributing wealth towards those people who are not going to vote for you anyway?

There is an old tradition in British politics—a good 15 years old—that the Conservative Party never gets any credit for spending in the state sector, in social security, health or education. Furthermore, an objective, amoral adviser to John Major might argue that he now has almost nothing to fear from Labour, which has been defeated by a combination of demography, geography and history. Major's principal worry is a change of government forced on him by his own party, and it is against this threat that his policy, and our money, must be directed. This means mainly the affluent non-urban population. Expect shifts in tax from earning to expenditure, and of course from public to private spending.

I got a sense of the London of the future over the weekend. Up to about the early seventies, futuristic films used to portray the big cities

Sean French on segregated Britain's no-frills shopping

of the 21st century as glossy shopping centres, all walkways and fountains, steel and glass. London is likely to be more on the *Blade Runner* model, a crumbling city that has been left to the disadvantaged. Media commentators talk about the new Sainsburys, Safeway and Waitrose hypermarkets as the shops of the future, and this may be true for one stratum of society—the Eloi, as they are called in H G Wells' *The Time Machine*. The fastest growing supermarket chain in Britain, though, is none of these, but Kwik-Save, the place where the Warlocks, the despised, subterranean dwellers, shop.

People are willing to pay the inflated prices of the hypermarkets, we are told, because of the degree of choice, the lighting and the elegant design, the spacious, free parking. Kwik-Save, by contrast, has wasted no money on architects or interior designers or anything else for that matter.

The stores are inserted into spaces in high-street sites from which the more famous names have decamped, and they have all the ambience of a DSS office and apparently much the same sort of clientele. The milk is about 20 per cent cheaper than anywhere else, and there are faintly menacing white packages, No-Frills Washing-up liquid and No-Frills Orange Juice stacked up without a hint of art or display. Many of the products are of brands you will find anywhere, but there are also weirdly cheap-looking kinds of cooking oil and strange cuts of meat. And the customers? Well, they haven't come to the shop in their Renault Espaces. They are mainly poor: old, black, single-parents, unemployed. Delete any that do not apply.

This is not state-ordered segregation on an apartheid model. Anybody can go to Kwik-Save, just as anybody can go to Le Gavroche. It's just that anybody doesn't, and this stratification can be seen in different ways. Take the proliferation of cooking columns in the mid-market and upmarket Sunday papers. How many of them deal with cheap, high-quality cooking? The joke is that the modish ingredients, such as pasta, oil, pulses, fish, basic vegetables, can be cheap, and the Mediterranean cuisines of which they form the main part are thoroughly proletarian. But you wouldn't think it from the writing on cookery pages, the peasant cooking made expensive for rich people. You couldn't explicitly provide recipes for poor people, because that would imply you had poor readers, and the whole point of cooking features is to be a part of the whole genre of lifestyle journalism designed to attract the AB classification of reader, who in turn attracts advertisers. Upmarket left-wing newspapers are in favour of the poor, but they hope that they don't make up too large a proportion of their readership.

This is what doomed the soap opera, *Crossroads*, the Kwik-Save of the airwaves, which was cancelled because although it attracted a large number of viewers, they were of the sort that didn't interest the makers of television commercials. It was rather reminiscent of the woman in Woody Allen's *Manhattan* who said that she was having no trouble achieving orgasm, but then her doctor told her she was having the wrong kind.

The death of the ex-Liberal Party leader, Jo Grimond, brought poignant reminders of a time when British society was stratified in a different way. There was a remarkable little memoir of him in the *Guardian* by his old friend and brother-in-law, Mark Bonham-Carter.

What would you like to be remembered for? Your kindness, perhaps, or your acid quick wittedness, the warmth of your hospitality, thoughtfulness, generosity, struggles on behalf of the oppressed of the world, your wealth? All these seem the sort of thing we might like to linger on in people's minds after we are gone. This is what Bonham-Carter remembered about the young Grimond back in the thirties: "He endeared himself to my mother because of his appearance, his Liberal politics, his academic record at Balliol and his good manners. Coming in from a wet walk one day, he took off his muddy shoes and left them in the hall."

I'm afraid that I don't move much in aristocratic circles so that I sometimes have difficulty in decoding the nuances of their behaviour, but what else could he have done with them? Thrown them on to the fire? Rubbed them clean on the curtains?

Or perhaps I am missing a political point here. A reactionary Tory would have insisted on having the butler come and wipe his shoes clean, with his tongue if necessary. A radical left-winger would have marched into the lounge, sorry, the sitting-room, as a political gesture.

I am very much afraid that this, albeit unconsciously, may be one of the most cruelly accurate comments on 20th-century Liberal Party politics. The man who, in Bonham-Carter's words, brought the Liberal Party back from the dead, is best remembered for taking his shoes off after walking in from the rain 55 years ago. Will John Smith be able to boast as much?

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JOHN COLE

A time to speak frankly

The effort of London and Dublin to hold out some hope to the beleaguered people of Northern Ireland is laudable. With fresh horrors day after day, it would be cruel if John Major and Albert Reynolds were to say: "Sorry, but we really can't see any way to help you; there's nothing more we can agree to do that we are not already doing."

But if ambiguity, that age-old poison of Anglo-Irish politics, is not to engulf the new, rather amorphous initiative, they need to be much, much franker with the public, as well as with each other. If you doubt that, study the utter confusion in the London-based media, and then wonder what people in Ulster itself are imagining.

Three documents require brisk analysis: the speech of Dick Spring, the Irish deputy prime minister; the joint declaration by Major and Reynolds in Brussels; and . . . well, there *would* be three documents, except that, astonishingly, the Hume-Adams conclusions have still not been published. Everybody can apparently know about them "except the Common People". But just as scholars of Biblical exegesis are able to deduce the contents of an earlier source, "Q" (German, *Quelle*), from the Gospels that have come down to us, so it is not difficult to work out, from the two published statements, what John Hume and Gerry Adams decided.

The key bit is not, as most commentators think, about a newly pacific IRA seat at the negotiating table. That would be painful, but possible. Surely their main conclusion is reflected in Dick Spring's first point: "The people living in Ireland, North and South, without coercion, without violence, should be free to determine their own future." But—and here comes the ambiguity in Spring's constructive speech—he also says that "the freely expressed consent" of the Unionist majority in Northern Ireland would be required before any change is made in its status, and for good measure recognises "once and for all . . . the freedom of Unionists to *withhold* their consent". The "consent" point is repeated in the Major-Reynolds Brussels text; the point about referendums North and South is notably absent.

Now an Englishman on a galloping horse might be excused for failing to notice that the whole of modern Irish history is encompassed in Spring's two carefully balanced paragraphs, and that this is the core of the past quarter-century of troubles. Nationalists have always wanted voters throughout Ireland to decide its constitutional position; Unionists have maintained that the vote about the North must be in the North alone.

Would governments not be storing up trouble for the future if they promised Unionists a veto on constitutional change, and simultaneously promised Nationalists either joint or separate referendums, North and South? What if—as all history suggests would happen—they gave different results?

Some innocents, like myself, recall that in Article 1 of the Anglo-Irish agreement—the treatythat the Unionists hated so much—the two governments already had affirmed that any change in the status of Northern Ireland would come about only with the consent of the majority of its people, recognised that their present wish was for no change, but declared that if the Ulster majority changed, both governments would accept that.

Unambiguous? *You* may say so, but Kevin McNamara, Labour's shadow spokesperson, couldn't confirm that. For there is a fourth document that is even more fascinating than the apparently more significant ones. In a densely argued speech in the Commons on 22 October—the day before the Shankill slaughter—McNamara put his own gloss on Article 1 and on Labour's statements on Northern Ireland. In doing so, he went out of his way to emphasise that he was enunciating British Labour Party policy: a prudent step for a man not elected to the shadow cabinet, but reappointed by successive party leaders.

If Labour sees power-sharing as part of an agenda for unification, it will be dead in the water before talks begin

There are two key points. First, he argues that Article 1 is deliberately ambiguous in not *defining* the constitutional status it guarantees. The two governments, he says, came to the talks "with different title deeds", both laying claim to sovereignty. McNamara says: "The Labour Party is opposed to the unilateral abandonment of either of the competing sovereignty claims." Both should be "on the negotiating table".

Now that seems to mean that, while Ireland's deputy prime minister and leader of its Labour Party envisages the repeal of Sections 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution (which embody the sovereignty claim), the British Labour spokesperson is outflanking him in his devotion to the Irish Nationalist cause. For while Dick Spring goes on to recognise the Unionist veto on change of status, McNamara says that no Labour government would "allow its commitment to consent to be transformed into a veto on political progress towards seeking (Irish) unification by consent".

None of McNamara's speech might need such attention, were it not for his further interpretation of Labour's doctrine of persuading the Unionists into consent. To build the consent that is necessary for unity, he says, Labour is committed to "work with the political parties in Northern Ireland to establish a developed power-sharing administration in Belfast". Compared with the earlier stuff, this is dynamite. For if it means anything, it means that power-sharing is the road to unity. That was what Unionist opponents of power-sharing have always said, and Westminster has consistently denied.

I have long believed that power-sharing between Protestants and Catholics in a Belfast administration of some kind is the best, perhaps the only hope of creating a political context for peace. I confess to some proprietorial interest in the concept. Taking the idea from the old Northern Ireland Labour Party, I advocated it in the *Guardian* leader columns from August 1970 onwards. This was its first mention in the British media, or indeed political system. Reginald Maudling, as home secretary, took it up, and Willie Whitelaw negotiated its first application, swiftly aborted by the UDA-supported strike.

Yet power-sharing still looks the only alternative to a long, bitter military campaign against terrorism. Even if it were successful, peace might not follow automatically. It must be in everyone's interests to persuade Unionists that power-sharing is a wise step for them to take.

Opponents within the Unionist flanks have always argued that it is the half-way house to Irish unity. Logic does not suggest they are right. The purpose of these, as of all previous negotiations involving Belfast, London and Dublin, is supposed to be to create a context in which violence can end. There is no reason why Catholics and Protestants living in Ulster should not share power within constitutional arrangements that a majority accept.

But if outsiders, especially such significant outsiders as Labour's alternative government at Westminster, see power-sharing as part of an agenda of Irish unification, it will be dead in the water before John Major and Albert Reynolds even begin.

Since this is one area where an opposition may have a direct influence on events, would it not be wise for John Smith to study carefully the probable consequences of what his Northern Ireland spokeman is saying on behalf of the Labour Party?

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Hot autumn for Italy?

Hundreds of thousands of Italians took to the streets last Thursday during a four-hour general strike in protest against the government's austerity programme. There were huge demonstrations in all the major cities, the most significant in Naples where 50,000 turned out to express their anger at mounting unemployment and the failure of the political class to do anything about it.

Recession has hit Italy with a vengeance in the past year, and the effect is particularly noticeable in the car industry, which has suffered a 25 per cent decline in its market in 12 months. After a long period of lay-offs and short-time working, Fiat is expected soon to announce the sacking of 12,500 workers: rumours are rife of the impending closure of the former Alfa Romeo plant in Milan. In the steel industry, it was announced this week, 12,000 out of 40,000 jobs are to go. There have also been substantial job losses in rubber and chemicals.

Unemployment is now running at 10.4 per cent nationally, and there are some 650,000 fewer people in employment than at this time last year. As ever, there is a vast disparity between the north and the south. While unemployment in the north is around 8 per cent, in the south it averages 30 per cent.

Every new closure is a local disaster—in the south because, typically, closures are of large factories, usually state-owned, which are the only significant employers in their areas, and in the north because of the knock-on effects of closures. The drop in car sales and subsequent shake-out of workers by Fiat in Turin has hit almost every other sector of the local economy from motor-parts suppliers to advertising agencies and supermarkets.

One reason for the leap in unemployment is the state of the global economy, but the crisis has been exacerbated by the government's austerity measures to bring public finances under control after the profligacy of the 1980s. High interest rates, required to attract investment in government bonds to finance the public debt, have deterred industrial investment and made borrowing difficult for small businesses. And spending cuts and tax increases have cut employment directly.

But public anger at the austerity package is not just anger at unemployment. There is a widespread sense that, through reduced pension rights, a wage freeze and tax hikes, those in work are being made to pay for the corruption of the political class and (to a lesser extent) industrialists in the 1980s. Similarly, the government's privatisation programme is widely seen as a final opportunity for corrupt politicians and industrialists to line their own pockets at public expense.

Last week's wave of protest took place against the backdrop of the first of what will

be a string of major political corruption trials, in which Sergio Cusani, a financier linked to the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) stands accused of being behind "the mother of all backhanders"—150 billion lire (£65 million) paid to politicians in the course of the demerger of the state-owned petrochemicals giant Eni and the private chemical company Montedison, owned by Raul Gardini who committed suicide this year. As if to underline just how far the web of corruption spread, last weekend an arrest warrant was issued for the head of Olivetti, Carlo de Benedetti, who turned himself in on Tuesday. In the meantime, Bettino Craxi, the former PSI leader, admitted that his party had received 187 billion lire (£80 million) in back-handers between 1987 and 1991 at national level alone.

Trade union leaders have not escaped the surge of anger against the establishment. At last week's demonstration in Turin, grassroots union activists and left-wingers from the Rifondazione Comunista group staged a mass walkout from the final rally when union leaders appeared on the platform; other cities witnessed similar scenes.

The major cause of discontent with the union leaderships is simply that they agreed to back the government austerity package in the summer—but there are also allegations that some were bribed during the 1980s into signing unfavourable agreements with employers. There is growing pressure from the grass roots, both for "solidarity" contracts (whereby, instead of redundancies, workers take wage cuts and a shorter working week) and for recognition in negotiations for factory councils rather than the official trade unions.

Meanwhile, the country is buzzing with rumours of shady secret service-linked plans for a *coup d'etat* following bombs earlier in the year in Rome, Florence and Milan, and more recent arrests of leading military figures under suspicion of various "irregularities". What basis there is to the rumours is impossible to judge, but no one would be surprised if the discredited political class had resorted to the dirtiest of methods in its desperate attempt to avoid destruction in a general election.

David Henderson

10 YEARS AGO

4 November 1983
"Lethal new phase in the cold war"

The New Statesman comments on the crisis in relations between the blocs caused by Nato's decision to deploy Cruise and Pershing II missiles in Europe

The great fraud . . . has been the Geneva disarmament negotiations themselves. Neither the US nor the Soviet Union has moved an inch from the positions that they have held since 1979 . . . When President Reagan was losing the propaganda war, he produced his "zero option". Even the Nato Assembly recognised that this was a "desirable but implausible goal" designed to place responsibility for the Nato nuclear modernisation on the Soviet Union. It would in effect have involved unilateral nuclear disarmament by the USSR, since in return for no new American deployment the Russians were being asked to remove all their existing intermediate rockets . . .

Since Eugene Rostow was dismissed as head of the US Arms Control Agency, the American negotiations have been firmly in the hands of General Rowny and others who make no secret of their view that total US dominance should be established before any serious negotiation should take place with the Russians. The arms race is now entering a new and lethally dangerous phase.

Irish coalition survives vote

Irish deputy prime minister and foreign minister Dick Spring's announcement in the Dail last week of his six principles for Northern Ireland peace delayed a vote of confidence in the coalition government, in which his Labour Party is the junior partner to Fianna Fail.

That the government had a 39-vote majority in the vote in the 166-member Dail says a lot about the coalition. The motion had been put after a disagreement over whether Ireland would get £7 billion or £7.8 billion in European aid to assist the government's National Plan. There was some genuine embarrassment among government ministers as the wily EC Regional Affairs Commissioner, Bruce Millan, won his argument that Ireland was being over-optimistic in its expectations.

Yet the row was not one of seismic proportions. Nor, indeed, have been the government's other problems since the coalition was formed in January. Supposedly insurmountable crises, such as the huge job losses at Aer Lingus or the row over the appointment of political coordinators for ministers, have passed without serious consequences. Labour

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NEWS FROM ELSEWHERE

has meanwhile succeeded in transforming the political landscape.

Spring took a huge risk by bringing Labour into coalition with Fianna Fail: previous coalitions with Fine Gael had split the party. But his gamble on negotiating a detailed programme for government with Fianna Fail leader Albert Reynolds seems to have paid off. Labour has remained united, and the government is working well in several key areas.

Controversial social policy is being pushed through rapidly, but without huge fuss. Ireland's archaic anti-gay laws have been replaced with a lower age of consent than that in the UK. All the old restrictions on contraception have been removed. Divorce will come next year. Abortion law remains the last taboo.

Fianna Fail was slated in the 1980s for its dubious political ethics: Labour ministers have introduced legislation to improve accountability. The first Labour education minister, Niamh Brethnach, is shaking up the system. Health minister Brendan Howlin has got the go-ahead for a long-delayed hospital project in Dublin. A Labour housing minister has introduced right-to-buy, accompanied by a major programme of new building.

But the picture is not entirely rosy. Although Fianna Fail's poll ratings have improved since the election and Labour's have slipped only slightly, the coalition still remains unconvincing on the economy. Unemployment is running at 18 per cent and Labour economy minister Ruairi Quinn has failed to impress so far. The latest dispute about EC funds will not help with economic credibility, although the National Plan remains highly ambitious and could transform Ireland's economic infrastructure.

All the same, opposition to the government is weak, both in parliament and in the country at large. Fine Gael, Ireland's long-time second party, nearly became its third party last year and has regained no support since. A recent internal inquiry slammed the party's incoherent structures, but its big problem is the uninspiring leadership of John Bruton, who has failed to score points against Reynolds or Spring inside or outside the Dail. The smaller Progressive Democrats have a new leader, Mary Harney, but are still without great impact, while Democratic Left has a few good deputies, but has been eclipsed among the Dublin working class by Labour.

In this climate, Spring feels confident in placing Northern Ireland higher on the Republic's political agenda than it has been for a long time. He is prepared to look imaginatively at all possible solutions. His statement last week, in which he emphasised the importance of Unionist consent for any changes in the Northern Ireland constitution, was a clever balancing act designed to keep all sides in the process—and to ensure that the John Hume-Gerry Adams talks continued, despite the crass coffin-carrying incident. Although it was Reynolds who met John Major this week, there are many in Ireland who see Spring as the real Taoiseach. One day, he might even have the formal title as well.

Conor Ryan

LETTER FROM BEIRUT

In his cluttered bookshop in the Hamra district of Beirut, Habib Khoury sips his coffee and offers me his prognosis of the new post-war Lebanon. "They've bombed us for 20 years," he says, "and now they want to take what's left of it on the cheap." If his words contain the ring of conspiracy endemic in this part of the world, they also reflect the sentiments of the many Lebanese who have deep suspicions about the way that their capital city is about to be transformed.

Not that anyone doubts the need for a transformation. A few days in Beirut is enough for anyone to realise how much war has reduced this once-sophisticated city. If it is now thankfully free from the violence of recent years, its residents still endure nightly power cuts, uncollected refuse, almost non-existent public facilities and a phone system so archaic as to be almost comical. Add to this lack of basic infrastructure the vast tract of shattered ruins that still disfigure the city's old "Green Line" between Christian and Muslim quarters, and the necessity for change becomes startlingly apparent.

The government's response to the problems seems to be driven by the country's main political force, the recently appointed Syrian-backed prime minister, Rafiq Hariri. Of Lebanese origin, Hariri returned to his native country after amassing a huge fortune in Saudi Arabia, and has set about applying his business acumen, not to mention significant personal funds, to the reconstruction project.

Property owners complain that their land is being taken from them without their consent

Almost upon taking office in November 1992, Hariri unveiled Horizon 2000, a scheme aimed at nothing less than rebuilding the whole of Lebanon, the focus being the reconstruction of the old commercial district of Beirut. A joint stock company called Solidere was created to undertake the redevelopment of the areas along the Green Line.

Backed by the new Law 117, Solidere has been granted powers to take over the property rights of the area's existing owners, who in return will get up to 50 per cent of the company's shares. The remaining 50 per cent are to be sold to outside investors to raise capital for the rebuilding itself. The company released plans of the envisaged "new city" early this year, claiming the Manhattan-style metropolis would provide prosperity and stability to Lebanon and a new commercial centre for the Middle East—all without immediate cost to the already stretched government.

Such was the plan. From the outset, however, criticism was rife. On one hand, property-owners complained that their land would be taken from them without their consent, and said that they would prefer to carry out work on it themselves. On the other, there were vehement protests from people worried about the architectural and cultural aspects of the redevelopment.

In the plan's original form, large sections of war-damaged, but still exquisite, Ottoman and French buildings were to be pulled down to make way for a trade centre and a clutch of skyscrapers. Recently, moreover, rumours have spread throughout Beirut of the existence of an ancient Roman law school buried deep beneath the city, which will be lost to the bulldozers.

Solidere's director of information, Mustafa Muradi, says that the criticisms have been addressed. "The initial plans were only a first step. Some of the owners will be able to keep their buildings. They well be charged 12 per cent, and the money will go towards resettling the squatters in the district. We're trying to accommodate everyone."

Similarly, he says, Unesco has been invited to oversee the preservation of the historic sites, and the plan has been altered to make sure that none of the old buildings of architectural merit will be destroyed. "Yes, we will modernise the interiors, but the facades will stay," he says. "We want to be flexible."

But promises that the new city will retain the cultural identity of the old still leave many unconvinced. "If they put a few red bricks in the top of a skyscraper, do you think that makes it Ottoman?" asks Meeda, a 22-year-old student.

And even if Muradi's reassurances are taken at face value, the vexed question of who stands to gain financially from the project remains. Elias Saba, a fomer minister of finance and leading critic of the plan, is adamant. "The whole project is geared to allow the takeover of prime Lebanese real estate by outside investors," he told me. "Why else sell all the shares in advance? Why can't the government keep control and raise the money as it goes?"

Saba is particularly critical of Hariri. The prime minister has already promised to take a 10 per cent stake in Solidere, he says, and has a major influence among fellow Saudi investors on its board. "Hariri is interested in short-term profit and not the long-term well-being of Lebanon. He is a businessman, not a politician. If this thing is built, the prime sites will be sold for massive gain, and we will be left to clear up the mess around it."

At present, the validity of Saba's accusations remain a matter for speculation. In January next year, final details of the project should be made known. It is possible that by then a peace deal might be signed between Israel, Syria and Lebanon, which would bring a whole new set of circumstances to bear. For the time being, however, the current plan remains, for better or worse, the most likely next stage in the city's long road back to normality.

Christopher Martin

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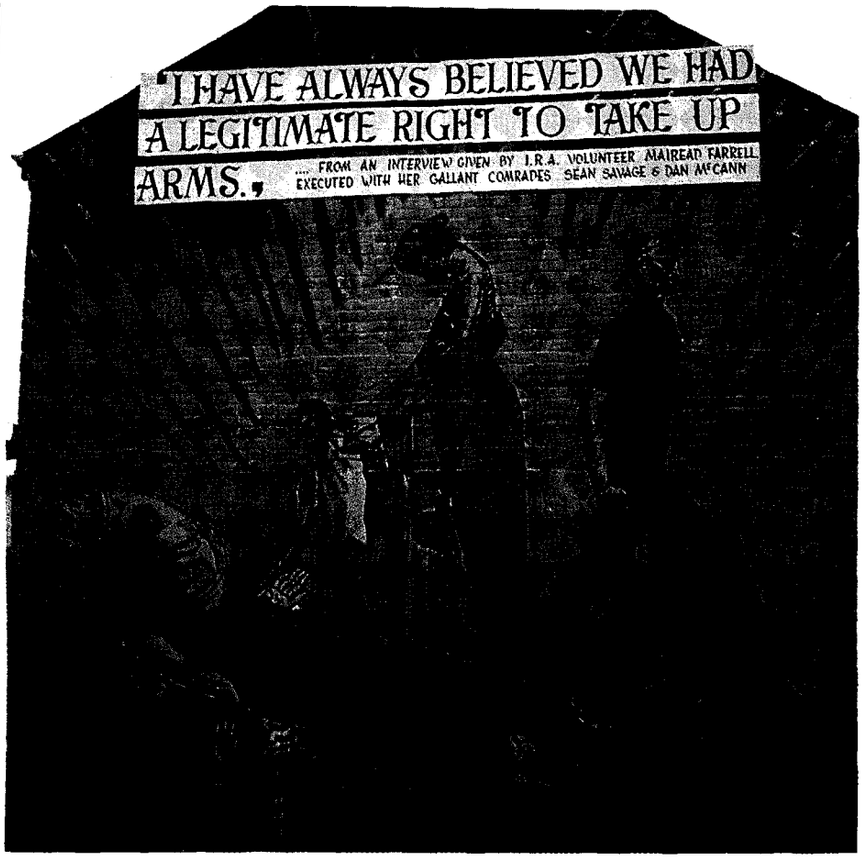
"I HAVE ALWAYS BELIEVED WE HAD A LEGITIMATE RIGHT TO TAKE UP ARMS."
.... FROM AN INTERVIEW GIVEN BY I.R.A. VOLUNTEER MAIREAD FARRELL EXECUTED WITH HER GALLANT COMRADES SEAN SAVAGE & DAN McCANN

Dario Mitidieri/Select

Give us this day our daily dead

You cannot explain the Troubles in terms of morality and individual evil, says **Eamonn McCann**, and you cannot solve Ireland's problems without socialism

It's never been as bad as this. Everybody knows that we are at the very edge. One more massacre like Greysteel and the barricades will go up, and the stage will be set for outright civil war.

We had been moving that way anyway, but then came the Shankill bomb, and an acceleration towards the abyss. We've had greater losses of life in comparable single incidents—Enniskillen for example—but there was something about this that made the whole of the North gasp with dread for what we feared would happen next, and now has.

What was distinctive about Enniskillen was the Sunday-suited Britishness of the gathering. What was most marked about the Shankill was its ordinary-working-classness. It gouged deeper down into us and dredged up darker thinking. Protestant working-class people felt directly targeted and reacted with personally felt rage. Meanwhile, people in Catholic working-class areas, if they weren't to turn on the Provos, who are part of themselves, *had to think harshly of Protestants*. Scores I spoke with regretted the way the Shankill bombing had worked out but would have had no problem if the operation had gone according to plan and the UDA leadership had been wiped out—this despite the fact that innocent Protestants, too, would still have been blasted to bits.

Catholic working-class people came to think like this because loyalist death-squads had been slaughtering Catholics in Belfast for months without anybody in authority seeming to care tuppence. In the three months leading up to the Shankill bomb, 14 people had been killed in the Northern conflict. Of these, 12 were accounted for by the UDA and UVF. One was a Protestant prison officer. The remaining 11 were Belfast Catholics, none of them a member of any political or paramilitary organisation.

And there had been scores of other, fortuitously unsuccessful attacks, some of which took place in circumstances that made it difficult to believe that the forces of the state put a high priority on stopping them. And, indeed, some elements of the state's forces had collaborated closely and at a high level with loyalist paramilitaries, as was revealed in the trial last year of Brian Nelson.

Nelson was the UDA's intelligence officer, with responsibility for targeting Catholics for killing, and simultaneously a military intelligence officer, briefing a "Colonel J" about his activities every month. "Colonel J" in turn briefed senior British Army officers, including the General Officer Commanding, Northern Ireland.

In January 1988, Nelson helped to organise the smuggling from South Africa of 200 AK47 automatic rifles, 90 Browning 9mm pistols, 500 fragmentation grenades, 30,000 rounds of ammunition and 12 RPG rocket launchers. A considerable quantity of these arms remains in loyalist paramilitary hands.

Between the arrival of the consignment and the Shankill bombing, 147 Catholics were killed by loyalist paramilitaries. We know from inquest evidence and from the published results of forensic tests that at least 67 of these killings, and very likely more, were carried out with these weapons. It is perfectly possible that the guns used in the Greysteel slaughter last Saturday night had been brought into the North with the connivance of British paramilitary intelligence.

All this is widely known here. Stop anybody at random on the Falls Road and ask about the "Nelson Affair" and there's a fair chance you will be told in detail about the UDA man Brian Nelson, "Colonel J", arms from South Africa and the killing of Catholics. This is the immediate context in which large numbers of people came to believe that the only way to stop the killing of Catholics week in and week out was for the IRA to take on and take out the loyalist paramilitary leaders, and why some were willing to contemplate the killing of innocent Protestants in the process. Of course, other considerations apart, from the point of view of working-class Catholics, the main result has been that more, not fewer, have been killed since.

Like Janis Joplin said, "How come half the world is crying, when the other half of the world is crying too, and they can't get it together?"

We have to look hard for hope and, when we see a spark faintly glowing, blow gently upon it. In the week before the Shankill bomb about a thousand people, overwhelmingly Protestant, left their work at Shorts and stood in the rain in memory of Jody Reynolds, a Catholic painter gunned down by the UVF as he arrived for work. And when Derry Trades Council called a city centre rally for Wednesday (3 November) in response to the Greysteel slaughter we were swamped in eager approval and promises to organise walk-outs from workplaces, most of them "mixed". That's part of the reality here, too.

There is still a faint, fitful sense of oneness. The trade union movement has a tremendous responsibility to nurture it, and build on it. Commentators talk endlessly about the need for something new. But what we need most of all are things that the trade union bureaucracy has almost entirely discarded as too old-fashioned for the shiny, happy people of the social-market economy . . . quaint concepts like class struggle, solidarity, an injury to one being an injury to all.

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The conflict in the North is commonly analysed, in both Britain and Ireland, in terms of the kinds of people directly involved in violence. Narrow nationalism, or loyalism, can distort the psyches of those it encloses, runs the argument. The prospect of finding a sort of sanction for inflicting violence on others attracts psychopaths. Racketeers see opportunities for brigandage and extortion. And so on. Thus the conflict is explained, or explained away, by reference to damaged or evil personalities.

The death of Jimmy Browne in September 1992 set me thinking about this. Jimmy was a leading member of the Irish People's Liberation Organisation, a breakaway from the Irish National Liberation Army, which had itself broken away from the Official IRA, which had been formed as a result of the 1970 split in the Republican movement that led also to the formation of the Provos. Every stage in this process of paramilitary subdivision had been marked by bloody feuds, which, particularly in Catholic working-class areas of Belfast, had engendered a sort of terrified despair, unnerving whole communities. "It's our own slaughtering our own!" an aunt of mine from the New Lodge Road lamented. "There's nothing worse." And neither there is.

In a Falls Road bar one day in 1987, during an "intermediate" split in the INLA, I happened upon the son of a woman I'd been a friend of in Derry in the early days, whom I knew to be an active member of one of the factions. I told him, uselessly, that his mother would have been distressed had she known what he was involved in, argued socialist politics at him for a pint's time, told him to watch out for himself. As I got up to leave, he grinned and asked if I wanted to know what they'd done to the man who phoned to set up "Ta" Power, an INLA leader who had been lured to a hotel in County Louth earlier in the year and gunned down. "We cut off the fucking finger he dialled with and stuck it up his arse before we killed him. Good, eh?"

The closer the feud, the smaller the group slicing itself up, the more terrible the violence, as if a particular effort has to be made, a special viciousness summoned up, in order to dehumanise yesterday's comrade in readiness for killing.

The various INLA factions had also been involved in openly sectarian atrocities, the most appalling being the massacre of Protestants at prayer in the Darkley Gospel Hall in County Armagh in 1983. On the face of it there were unusually good grounds for arguing that the factions of the INLA at least could adequately be explained by reference to the evil of people in membership. But that isn't what I used to argue with Jimmy about when we met. Almost always, we plunged into disputation about nationalism.

Jimmy always insisted, to me anyway, that although a nationalist in the sense of having been born into the nationalist community of the Lower Falls, he wasn't a nationalist with regard to political ideas. You are a nationalist, Jimmy, I'd respond, forever talking about "the nationalist people" and the need for "national independence" and such. He'd argue that that didn't make him a nationalist, that he was a socialist Republican, following the same political line as James Connolly.

The second-last time I saw him, a few months before he died, I quoted a ballad of Connolly's to him which has a refrain, "Whoop it up for liberty/Shouts the Patriot who can't stand socialism." But Jimmy had a good point in reply, that Connolly on the face of it had not been consistent in following through the line of the lyric: in 1916 he had joined with just the sort of Patriot he had scorned in his song to help launch the Rising.

Standing on the pavement we argued the toss about it for a time until my four-year-old's preference for potato crisps prevailed. We agreed that Connolly had not buckled under the pressures or trimmed his politics to slot into prevailing public opinion. More important was the fact that, for the most part, the Patriots he made common cause with at Easter 1916 didn't *actually* slag off socialism at all—but argued rather that the time wasn't right to talk of such things.

Later, afterwards, they'd say, once freedom is won, *then* all questions pertaining to the way Irish society is to be organised will come onto the agenda. Then the Irish people, free of outside interference, can make their own choices. And at that point, the Patriots would generally proclaim, they themselves would be fiercely on the same side as the socialists. But one step at a time . . .

This, somewhat oversimplified, was the argument to which Jimmy referred, which propelled Connolly into alliance with the Patriots and has locked his legacy into the nationalist history of Ireland ever since. No doubt it was an enticing argument in Connolly's time, when prospects seemed dim for socialists operating on their own and nationalism seemed vibrant and in tune with the tenor of the times. For the same reasons, it can be an enticing argument still. Jimmy was one of many who found it so.

"We cut off the finger he dialled with and stuck it up his arse before we killed him. Good, eh?"

The question of whether or not it's futile to fight for ordinary social justice while partition still exists is of obvious and tremendous relevance to the view to be taken of the Republican armed struggle. If it is the case that there is no point trying to end injustice until the border has been erased, then there is a strong argument for supporting the Republican campaign in order to speed the day when we can set about the creation of a just and decent way of life, and for uniting in the meantime with all and any who are willing to exert themselves against partition, irrespective of what their line might be on socialised medicine, trade union rights, free education, church-state relations, whatever.

This perspective makes particular sense if you come from, say, the Lower Falls and were 12 or 13 when the world around you went clean mad in the late 1960s. It is a perspective from which it follows that the "other" community is best ignored, neutralised . . . or fought against. This is the political context in which members of the IPLO, describing themselves as socialists, carried out sectarian attacks, killing an elderly, inoffensive Protestant man in May 1992, for example, as he sat drinking in a quiet Belfast pub.

It is not a particularly bizarre or distorted context, as far as Irish political history is concerned. It is an authentic, if extreme, expression of mundane nationalist ideology, its extremity resulting from the circumstances of the North over the past 25 years. This is not to say that nationalism tends inevitably towards sectarian violence. It is to say that there is nothing in or about nationalism to rule out sectarian violence, no necessary contradiction between one and the other. And if socialist ideas are submerged within nationalism, then the contradiction that does exist between socialism and sectarian violence is hidden away, and ceases to matter.

This is important because, although Jimmy Browne was involved in atrocious things, I never thought of him as an atrocious person, and indeed he wasn't. He was a bright, chirpy, amiable companion, with a sharp political intelligence and a genuine idealism in that he sought little for himself from his pursuit of political objectives. And his political objectives, of and in themselves, were entirely decent and supportable.

But put at the service of a project which Jimmy believed had to be completed before his ultimate objectives could begin to be realised, they became their own negation, were transmuted into evil. Nationalism, the political ideology which in one form or another is casually, unconsciously accepted by the great majority of the people of Ireland, and which, on account of the continuing oppression of the Catholics, is to be found in much its most intense form in the North, provided the necessary catalyst for this terrible moral alchemy.

Most moralising about the local combatants might be foolish, but it's true, too, that the Troubles have touched all of us with evil. Many people in Derry openly celebrated the death of Jim Harkness (not his real name) in Altnagelvin hospital, in December 1992.

Five days previously, at 8pm on a Tuesday night, an IRA unit had used a sledgehammer to smash into his home in the Shantallow estate on the northern edge of the city. Harkness was seized, forced to lie on the ground and then shot point-blank in the back of both knees with a .38 Magnum. The bones, tendons, muscles and arteries of both legs shattered, he crawled to the door, gushing blood and screaming for help. By the time neighbours were alerted and an ambulance summoned he was almost drained of blood. His heart stopped on the way to Altnagelvin. He never recovered consciousness.

In a statement admitting the shooting, the IRA accused Harkness of having sexually abused a large number of young children in the nearby Carnhill estate. This was true. Over a period of at least a year he had also encouraged and "supervised" a young boy as he participated in the abuse of younger

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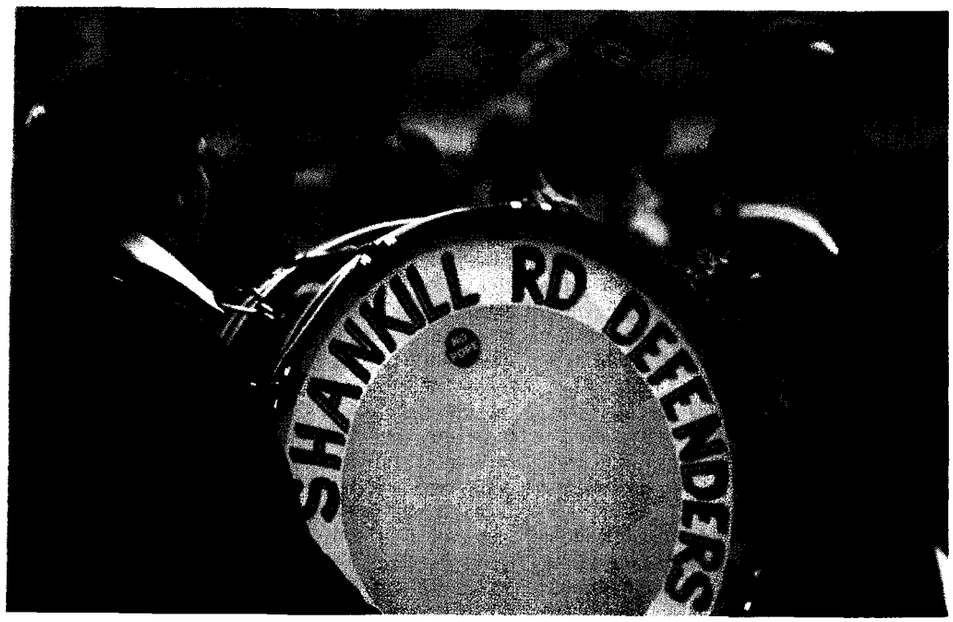

Richard Oliver/Select

children. Most of the victims were girls, as young as seven. On one occasion, Harkness raped a little girl while the boy watched, then instructed him to rape her again. Almost all the violated children came from the square in Carnhill where the Harkness' own children lived with their mother and her partner. She had left him nine years previously after suffering numerous serious physical assaults. However, Harkness frequently visited his children at their home.

Support for the IRA action was widespread; Harkness was spoken of as a sordid presence whose removal from the community, by whatever means, was wholly to be welcomed. His involvement in INLA-related gangsterism in the 1980s, when he served two and a half years on a conspiracy charge, and a suspended sentence for "flashing" at children in 1982, as well as various stories of casual street violence, were cited as examples of an irreformably evil nature.

Covering the story for *Hot Press* and the *Independent on Sunday*, I came to know Harkness' wife, Jean. She seemed to me a remarkable woman, forthright and articulate, and handling her horrendous situation with great courage and poise. She recognised that many of the families around her were living in constant horror of what had happened to them and that it was inevitable that their feelings were to some extent focused on her household. But then the contentment of her family, too, had been shattered. She lost her part-time job in a city-centre restaurant following phone-calls protesting at her employment, and eventually had to move out of the area, feeling hemmed in by hostility.

She was clear that her ex-husband had to be put away for a long time, both as punishment for what he'd done and on account of how vital this was for the peace of mind of his victims and their families. But she didn't believe the IRA had the right to do what it did.

The case had first come to public attention at the beginning of December 1992 when—the Derry air already thick with rumour—the *Journal* had led an edition with the headline: "RUC PROBE CARNHILL SEX ABUSE". At the same time, Sinn Fein's office on the nearby Racecourse Road was being besieged with demands that something direct and drastic be done.

There were explicit demands for IRA action not just against Harkness but against the young boy he had enticed into his activities. The demands were vigorously rejected by senior Republican figures in the area. "Are you asking me to arrange for a child to be shot?" an incredulous Sinn Fein representative asked a crowd of parents pressed into the party's tiny office. The response came in a chorus of affirmation.

The Republican movement had become central to the case because of the obvious policing problem in working-class Catholic areas like Carnhill and Shantallow. Voting figures suggest the majority of people here are in the SDLP, not the Sinn Fein camp. But since there is, effectively, no support at all for the RUC, even SDLP supporters tend to look to the IRA when they want action against local criminality. Given the increasing fervour with which people were demanding action, as a flurry of statements being taken from local children began to reveal the horrifying extent of Harkness' abuse, there's little doubt the Republican movement would have significantly lost support had its armed wing not exacted retribution.

A case like Harkness' was tailor-made for the Provos' military wing anyway, widespread horror and fear translating into acceptance of the IRA as enforcer of a communal morality and providing the organisation with a role separate from, and largely independent of, the armed struggle to force a British withdrawal. This is the background to the IRA's particular enthusiasm for handling morally charged issues—the targeting of drug dealers comes into the same category.

More generally, the savage satisfaction in the locality at the maiming and death of Jim Harkness reflected the cumulatively brutalising effect that a quarter of a century of violence has had on us all. A clear majority of adults in Carnhill and Shantallow have had friends, neighbours, relatives killed in the Troubles, in many cases by the security forces against whom there seems to be no legal redress. There are very few familes here with no direct experience of British Army or RUC intimidation and violence. The idea of responding with direct, extreme violence against anyone perceived as threatening the community has come to seem to many the natural way of doing things, a first option rather than a last resort.

Nobody will ever know now the exact process by which the demons came to scream in Jim Harkness's mind, but to some extent they must have derived from and been shaped by the society that surrounded him. He was one of 13 children, of whom two died in infancy, born in Springtown Camp, the scatter of corrugated tin huts on the outskirts of Derry, abandoned by US forces at the end of the second world war and then squatted by families from the Bogside who had been denied homes because they were Catholics. He spent his formative years in deep poverty and appallingly crowded conditions, in a community over which a church that identified sexuality with sinfulness and exercised ideological hegemony, and in a wider society that, every day, in a thousand subtle ways, invited even the most powerless of young males to believe that it was through sex that they could experience a feeling of power. As a child he was severely abused physically, and possibly—because it was a common occurrence—sexually as well.

If there was a fragment of hope gleaming anywhere amidst the moral debris of Jim Harkness' story, it lay in those like Jean Harkness who managed somehow to transcend their own suffering, to feel for everybody and blame nobody, and believe in a better day coming. Standing some distance from the grave-side as they buried her ex-husband she turned away to say, "Everybody in this story is a victim."

On the face of it Wolfe Tone's aspiration "to substitute the common name of Irishman, in place of the denomination of Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter" is no more now than airy conceit. None of the major players in the Northern game has a perspective of offering a different, common identity to the divided people.

Much commentary is predicated on an assumption of moral horror at the cruelty of what is happening here, the pain endlessly inflicted on decent, innocent people, swept up into the violence or killed, maimed or broken-hearted by it as it suddenly brushes devastatingly past. And in terms of human values and of the general decencies of life, this is a good enough motivation for any sort of involvement in an effort to bring peace. But it doesn't amount to an understanding. It's only the beginning of an interest.

Often, however, it's the end of the argument. As in the immediate aftermath of the Warrington bomb, Shankill or Greysteel, the urgency of stopping the violence overwhelms all other considerations. "Peace" comes to be seen as the solution rather than a by-product of the solution. The unspoken implication is that other aspects of the situation should, as far as is possible, be left undisturbed, the integrity of "the two traditions" held sacrosanct. Thus, none of the peace projects whose ruins litter the past 20 years, and none of the collapsed constitutional schemes, has sought to end the

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division. They've all been designed not to bring people together but to keep them apart.

O'Neill's "reform package" of 1968, the Downing Street Declaration of 1969, the Sunningdale Agreement of 1973, the Constitutional Convention of 1976, the "Atkins Conference" of 1980, the "Prior Assembly" of 1982, the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985, the "Brooke Talks" of 1992 all accepted that there was nothing to be done about the division except to manage it. Each envisaged "the two communities" living alongside each other, but apart, and provided for a sort of political sprinkler system that would automatically switch on when abrasion at the interface threatened to flare up into a new conflagration.

This gloomy, stale, unprofitable perspective is now accepted almost everywhere as unchallengeable common sense, one reason being that to reject the sectarian division outright begs the question of what alternative basis the people might have for expressing political preference. The reason this question is rarely asked is that class is the only answer. Only a socialist perspective holds out any hope of freeing the Catholic working class into a society in which the Protestant working class too would rejoice to live. Only the vision of a socialist future can outshine both the fierce votive lamps of Catholic nationalism and the bonfire blaze of Orange defiance. And in the shorter term, only a class perspective holds out hope of bringing large numbers of people together on specific issues now.

But then class isn't a cool concept anymore. That's one of the differences between the 1960s, when the latest round of the Troubles began, and the 1990s. The notion of class came naturally then, not just in Ireland but everywhere that we knew of. Many of the great figures of intellectual life talked the language of class and anti-imperialist struggle. The bogeymen of the priests who taught me at school, Bertrand Russell and Jean-Paul Sartre, were world figures, famous far beyond the frontiers of literature and philosophy for their anti-war activities and involvement in socialist struggles. Young people read, or at least thought it important to claim to have read, Marcuse, Debray, even a little light Trotsky. Playwrights, film-makers, painters, professors, pop stars with pretensions to seriousness were likely to present themselves as Marxists of one sort or another. There were some who saw in a vision that "Highway 61" was the American Road to Socialism. Those who wanted to live within the comfort of the consensus could advertise a commitment to working-class struggle.

The defeat of the big battalions of the working class in set-piece battles in the 1980s, particularly in Britain but also in the US and on mainland Europe, shattered any romantic view of working-class struggle. Dour defence was needed now. There was little exhilaration in it. And then there was the collapse of the Stalinist tyrannies. Those who had identified the dictatorships as "socialist" found their illusions crumbling into rubble with the Berlin Wall. The ideological armies of the new right made a steady advance.

Much of the left lost confidence in its own ideas, and this had its effect in the North. The idea we set out with back in 1968, not of joining the communal conflict but intervening to overcome it, not of continuing our history but conquering it, didn't fit into any accessible framework. Especially when so much of the rest of Europe seemed nightmarishly to be reshaping itself along traditional Northern Ireland lines.

John Hume used to talk about what an anomaly the North was, this place at the edge of Europe where communal hatred was endlessly recycled. Two world wars had been fought in Europe this century, he'd exclaim, but look, the disputes which gave rise to them are settled. Why can't we do the same?

But the North doesn't make such a blotch on the map now, as bigger horrors seep through elsewhere. The pleasant landscape John invited us to contemplate had not set solidly after all. Beneath the surface, the same hatreds seethed, the grievances that generated them still unremedied.

Communalising of various sorts, which we assumed had long ago cooled down and become of no concern, are scorching life again everywhere we look, most obviously in the former Yugoslavia. Northern Ireland is not an oddity now, just a tiny example of something huge that's happening.

A desire for "peace" doesn't amount to an understanding. It's only the beginning of an interest

And as in Northern Ireland, so elsewhere, all the solutions on offer from major interests involve not bringing people together but policing them apart. Everywhere, the mediators and conciliators are running through the checklist of constitutional initiatives and proposals, the equivalents of partition, Direct Rule, the Power-sharing Executive, the Anglo-Irish Conference, Joint Authority and all the rest. Because everywhere it is the case that those who rule over us want no fundamental change. They strive instead to reallocate populations in such a way as to leave basic class structures undisturbed. They fear nothing so much as that the plain people should rise up and free ourselves from the domination of the identities that divide us, to grasp some other sense of ourselves that we share with our Serb, Croat, Bosnian, Azeri, Armenian, Georgian, white, black, Catholic, Protestant, female, male, gay, straight neighbours, with the people we live alongside and in the midst of, with people of our own class. Class. That's what can unite us. There is nothing else. We will have socialism, or we will have barbarism.

Eamonn McCann's book "War and an Irish town", first published in 1974, has just been reissued as a Pluto Classic. It includes a new introduction, some of which has been drawn upon for this article

INFLUENCES

SARAH DUNANT
Crime-writer and TV presenter

What books and authors have had the greatest influence on your political beliefs?
As a student, William Shirer's *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* and E P Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* impressed me deeply.

Name one film, book, play, poem, and song or piece of music that you would most like everyone to see, read or hear.

Film: Nic Roeg's *Eureka*, a passionate, violent, erotic study of a man destroyed by achieving his dream; one of the most underrated British films of the past 25 years.

Book: As Roddy Doyle's Booker-winning *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha* corners the market in boyhood, how about Miles Franklin's wonderful evocation of female adolescence and early feminism in 19th-century Australia, *My Brilliant Career*, written when she was 16.

Play: C P Taylor's *Good*. An amazing play, showing how a decent, ordinary man in thirties' Germany becomes sucked into fascism. It destroyed for me the cosy notion that it's only evil men who do evil things.

Poem: "This be the verse" by Philip Larkin. Better known by its first line: "They fuck you up, your mum and dad." I love it because it is both compassionate and angry, and because Larkin understands—even though he never did it—how very hard parenting is. I want everyone to read it because when I was a young producer at Radio Four, I wasn't allowed to play it because of the word "fuck"!

Song: "Astral Weeks" by Van Morrison—20 years ago I fell in (and out of) love to this album and it still hurts sweetly to listen to it.

In the early stages of your life, which figures stand out as an important influence on you?
A history teacher called Miss Scott, who awakened a passion in me for the past. And my father, who from my earliest memories convinced me that women were at least the equal to men, and that there was nothing I couldn't do as long as I believed in it enough.

If you could visit any time in history for 24 hours, which would you choose?
Mount Calvary at the time of the crucifixion, because I suspect it's the only way I'll ever become a real believer.

What do you consider the greatest threat at present to individual freedom and liberty?
That we, both as individuals and as a nation, have done nothing to stop rape, massacre and attempted genocide taking place in former Yugoslavia. Where might becomes right there is no hope for freedom or liberty.

On important matters, whose opinion—other than your own—do you trust most?
My partner, Ian's, and my best friend, Suzie's, who—alas—lives in new York, which means important decisions involve large phone bills.

Who is the greatest prime minister we never had?
I have no idea.

If you could pass one law, what would it be?
To outlaw the British National Party.

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Schools have now been subjected to a decade of fundamental ill-managed changes, says **Trevor Fisher**, and now is the time for a reversal of policies

Locked into a destructive Patten

NOW THAT HER MAJESTY'S INSPECTORS HAVE BEEN EFFECTIVELY BANISHED THE STATE SYSTEM IS WITHOUT ANYONE TO INSPECT THE STATE OF THE SYSTEM.

Min Cooper

The Conservative Party conference this year presented two sharply contrasting views of education. Douglas Hurd condemned the "Maoist" excesses of those whom he dismissed as "cultural revolutionaries", people who wanted public officials such as doctors and teachers "periodically despatched to the rice fields for thought reform and indoctrination".

Education Secretary John Patten, however, broadcast a very different message. At a fringe meeting, he announced that the new funding agency for schools (FAS), which comes into operation next April, would be used to shake up education authorities. One of its first jobs would be "getting there and mixing it with some LEAs". The FAS would be "a powerful engine for educational change". And in a remarkable move, Patten named five authorities on a hit list, and made deeply personal attacks on Roy Pryke, Kent's director of education, and Tim Brighouse, the Birmingham chief education officer.

Patten's apparent desire for confrontation might be considered an example of Hurd's "Maoist excesses". It is certainly a curious reaction from a man revealed over the summer to be almost universally detested by the education profession. A poll carried out jointly by the *Observer* and education publisher Cassell recorded serious levels of dissatisfaction among the well-informed. Fifty-nine per cent rated him the worst minister of the past decade.

Patten shows little concern at his unpopularity among the professionals. The well-publicised teacher/parent revolts of the spring forced him and his deputy, Baroness Blatch, on to the defensive on assessment and testing. But it was the electoral fall-out from parents that forced the Tories into evasive action. The opinions of what the Tory hierarchy dismisses as "the educational establishment" have long since ceased to carry weight. Indeed, Patten's first move on returning to duty in September after a prolonged period of illness was to reiterate his support for payment by results—the policy that, even more than testing, has alienated the teaching profession.

His commitment to a collision course with educational professionals comes after a summer when many hoped a new era was about to dawn. A series of concessions was made by the government's advisors, such as the National Curriculum Council recommendation that teachers should not have to correct pupils' speech. Ron Dearing, new head of the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority, issued a conciliatory report on the disputes over testing and the national curriculum. He appeared willing to listen to critics, and his report was welcomed.

Dearing, however, is only a government advisor. It is the actions of the politicians that are crucial. And, despite well-publicised claims of government retreats, the reality is that the concessions are mainly cosmetic.

Since coming to power in 1979, the Tories have passed more education legislation than all their predecessors put together. The Education Acts of Margaret Thatcher—1980, 1986, and above all the Education Reform Act of 1988—were designed to unravel the previous political consensus that education should not be subject to political control. After Thatcher, many in education looked to John Major to take a new, less ideological course. They were disappointed.

Major has proved an enthusiastic follower of right-wing educational policy. He continued the Thatcherite reforms with sweeping legislation in 1992 and 1993, and publicly endorsed Thatcherism in education in the summer of 1991 when addressing the hard-right Centre for Policy Studies. Under Major, the Tories have pursued the attack against the "educational establishment"—teachers, advisors, teacher trainers and local education authorities—with unswerving zeal.

Criticism of Tory policy has steadily mounted, however, as each successive reform has begun to bite. Significantly, the most telling criticism has come from a leading Tory backbencher, Sir Malcolm Thornton, an experienced educational observer, and chair of the Commons Select Committee. In a speech at de Montfort University last December, Thornton attacked what he called "the lords of misrule", "the extreme right-wing think tanks . . . the offsprings of bigoted minds and muddy understandings". "Whole sections of our nation, once respected for common sense, have been brainwashed into an acceptance of their dogma," he said.

Equally strong hostility is felt by many shire county Tories, furious at the impact of opting-out of schools into central government funding and control. They were assured that opting-out would allow schools in inner-city, loony-left local authorities to remove themselves from local politics. Instead, most of the opted-out schools have emerged in Tory-controlled areas, and the government has thus been actively undermining Tory local councils. The deep resentment this engendered contributed to the Tory disasters in this May's county council elections.

Electoral unpopularity, however, is insufficient to force the government into more than cosmetic concessions. On 20 April, at Question Time, Major painted himself into a corner when he made the extraordinary comment: "I believe any attempts to sabotage our reforms could damage our long-term ability to compete, and would damage the education of our children." Any prime minister who argues that attempts to change policy amounts to sabotage is not in the business of rational discussion of the policy in question.

Problems are in evidence throughout the system, from the primary school to the university. They centre on three main areas: the stresses produced by the attempt to create a market system of competition between educational institutions; the politics of the centralisation of power; and the serious consequences of demoralising and de-skilling the teaching force.

The politics of competition have largely attracted attention through the bitter series of parental ballots on opting-out of local control. Less obvious, but more dangerous, effects centre on the competitive pressures brought about by the publication of league tables of exam results. These are recreating the old grammar-school mentality where only those children capable of "O" level GCE—or grades A-C in the new GCSE system—are worth anything. The comprehensive attempt to nurture the value of middle- and low-ability children is thus subverted.

This waste of talent is not merely unjust and inefficient. It is producing a dangerous Crisis of Exclusion. Schools that have now to justify themselves as exam factories are expelling troublesome pupils in increasingly large numbers. Over the past two years, as the effects of league tables have bitten, the number of exclusions has soared. And with LEAs unable to enforce their legal duties to secure school places now that admission policies have been devolved to school level, expelled pupils have been systematically refused places at other schools. The response has been a panic order to councils to set up exclusion

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units for expelled pupils. The educational value of what will become sink institutions will be limited, and the likely consequence a dangerous pool of disaffected youth.

Equally serious implications flow from the centralisation of power. Until Thatcherism, politicians fought shy of interfering with curricula and teaching methods, fearful of totalitarian implications. Now, everything is to be subject to political control, from the school timetable to the teaching of the use of the apostrophe. Much has been written about this, but an essential political point has been missed. The most dangerous act of the Tory reform programme has not been the overt political interference, but the effective and deliberate destruction of the Inspectorate.

Until the creation of the Office of Standards in Education, Her Majesty's Inspectors were genuinely independent, and subjected government activities to scrutiny. Modern Conservatism cannot bear such scrutiny and broke the Inspectorate's power to make independent criticisms. The consequence is that, while inspectors still inspect schools, inspection of government policies has ceased. Evaluation of the state of the system now depends on political whim.

The example of the GCSE is a case in point. Instigated by Keith Joseph in 1984, reactions to the first batch of results (in the summer of 1988) were to hail it a great success. When John Patten's ear was caught by the grammar-school lobby in 1991 and 1992, however, the talk turned to falling standards and the need to return to "O" level. When parental hostility to this downgrading of children's results became clear, the line switched again. By 1993, GCSE was once more officially successful.

The point here is not whether GCSE is a success, but that no genuine evaluation can be made because the inspectors are now creatures of the political machine. When, in 1992, the inspectors reported "only limited confidence" that standards were being maintained at GCSE, part of the outrage that greeted the statement came from the contrast between the overwhelming endorsement of the exam by politicians and inspectors up to that time, and the sharp switch of line that then ensued.

Now, everything is to be subject to political control, from the school timetable to the teaching of the apostrophe

The independence of the inspectorate was further compromised this summer when it was revealed that inspectors had been compiling secret dossiers on the attitude of head-teachers to national curriculum tests. They were also required to report on the stance taken by school governors. A number of inspectors protested that their independence had been compromised, and one was quoted as saying: "Patten is trying to turn us into political spies." A Department of Education spokesperson defended the decision on the basis that "testing is an important part of government education policy, and inspectors have to report on all aspects of what goes on in schools."

The most drastic effect of the politicisation of education is, however, the demoralisation and de-skilling of teachers. Teachers have been made the scapegoat for educational and social problems, with the Tories treating them as the enemy within. The attitude implicit in Conservative plans to bring unskilled bodies into the classroom indicates that they regard teaching, at least at primary level, as little more than childminding.

These plans, particularly the proposed replacement of the current four-year teacher training programme with a one-year certificate, should be seen in the context of Patten's proposals to abolish existing teacher training arrangements and replace them with a Teacher Training Agency. The new plans, which include the abolition of the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, not only raise the prospect of teaching being de-skilled, learned on the job without any theoretical input, but also raise the prospect of the Secretary of State controlling the training and employment of teachers.

It is widely believed that, if and when the recession ends, large numbers of demoralised teachers will seek pastures new. The key areas at risk are maths, physics and chemistry, where graduates are already at a premium. Any substantial exodus would turn the current spiral of decline in maths and science into a landslide. There is also increasing anecdotal evidence that good quality graduates in arts and social sciences are avoiding teaching, thus reducing the quality of the teaching force even in areas traditionally able to attract highly qualified graduates.

There is more at stake here than the reputation of a minister. Schools have now been subjected to more than a decade of endless, fundamental, and ill-managed changes. As in the cultural revolution in China, the impact has long since gone beyond any rational process of development and improvement. Even supporters of the early stages of the Conservative programme are becoming alarmed by the impact of continuous, relentless and never-ending change. In his speech at the Conservative Party conference, Douglas Hurd argued: "It would be wrong to think that our assault on what the state does badly means we have a vendetta against the state . . . We should not give the impression that we believe in a permanent cultural revolution in the style of Trotsky or Chairman Mao."

Hurd must be well aware that many in education have long since concluded that Tory policy towards state schools is based on precisely such a vendetta. And as in China in the sixties, what was once a workable and productive system is now showing signs of serious stress.

In the paddy fields of Britain's state schools, the peasants are experiencing increasing difficulties in meeting their production targets. It is time that a sustained effort to reverse the reforms was mounted, before the Conservatives' Great Leap Forward damages the system beyond repair.

RSI

(On High Court Judge John Prosser's ruling that repetitive strain injury is "meaningless" and that the term "only served to confuse")

I have an illusion of "judges"
again and again and again
like a terrible phantom which trudges
my brainwaves I'm going insane
it's barking but nobody budges
they refrain when they hear my refrain
I have an illusion of "judges"
which gives me repetitive strain

my fancy these charlies have Power
goes round and around and around
it haunts me from hour to hour
like a spook springing up from the ground
my nerves are in shreds and I cower
aware just how crazy I sound
when I fancy these charlies have Power
oh I wish that a cure could be found

I dream they wear wigs and hear cases
they haven't a clue how to treat
like an amputee doing up laces
or an eye surgeon working on feet
my heart's put through terrible paces
though I know they're like mirage in heat
yet I dream they wear wigs and hear cases
it's a strain I repeat I repeat

Bill Greenwell

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Rather than force the Serbian regime to make concessions, writes **Mark Thompson**, UN sanctions have bound the people more tightly to Milosevic's ruling party

Belgrade's hoop of steel

The mood at this year's fashion show in the Belgrade trade fair was defiant. Outside, an autumnal drizzle and darkness; inside, mannequins sported Serbian beachwear, polyester garments from Banja Luka in Bosnia, knitwear from Ilok in Croatia, skiing outfits from Macedonia.

The show's title was, as usual, "Fashion in the World". The world may have shrunk to Serbia, Montenegro, the "liberated" bits of neighbouring republics, and poor Macedonia. But the official signal here and everywhere in so-called Yugoslavia is that *we* have not changed, change has been forced on us by others to whose threats and hatred we only react in self-defence.

The same message is implied by the Yugo- prefix on commercial titles around the city, and the unaltered roadsigns with their Croatian and Bosnian destinations, as if you might jump in your car and drive there as of yore—assuming you could afford black-market petrol at 2.5 Deutschmarks a litre.

The upshot of international sanctions is not that petrol is unobtainable. You can buy as much as you like, but illegally and at sky-high cost. The average Serbian wage is 15DM per month, the average pension is 4DM, and with inflation at about 1 per cent hourly, wages must be spent immediately or converted into black-market DM. In these ways, a gangster regime criminalises the population. This brings useful benefits; apart from exhausting people in the struggle to subsist, it blurs the moral difference between the regime and its subjects, and fosters that proverbial Serbian sense of embattled solidarity.

Psychologically, sanctions don't subvert Slobodan Milosevic's authority because they do not dent his status as peerless champion of national interests. (It was this status that got him re-elected last December.) Yet the Serbian president cannot be comfortable: economic hardship makes everything even more volatile, and if he doesn't reap the dividend of being the leader who gets sanctions lifted, someone else will. The western powers have chosen to let this be their only real leverage against the dictator. Hence sanctions aren't merely ruthless (hurting the most vulnerable: babies, invalids, pensioners) but cynical, because as a substitute for the appropriate military means against Serb expansionism, they impose collective guilt on everybody in Serbia and Montenegro. Collective guilt of this sort is an untenable concept. What's more, it draws on those same sources of primitive prejudice that the Milosevic regime has exploited so ably for the past six years. And if you play that man at his own game, he wins.

Bad conscience, however, there certainly is. It showed in the sidelong way Bosnia entered conversations with intellectuals, and in the latter's fondness for a sophisticated analysis. To wit: given that the Sarajevo government was dominated by a Muslim national party that sought an integral Bosnia-Hercegovina, was this demand not just as nationalist as the Bosnian Serb and Bosnian Croat demands for territorial autonomy and segregation?

This line of thought, which uses the undoubted faults of President Izetbegovic and his party to discredit the principle of Bosnian pluralism, underpinned many talks I had in Belgrade. To be sure, the need for exculpation may count for less in this regard than other factors: the general post-communist disorientation, the intellectuals' familiar fascination with power, and the ingrained condescension towards Bosnian Muslims.

Milos Vasic, the celebrated commentator at the independent weekly *Vreme*, spoke of the Serbs' blind spot about Bosnia—"the size of Oregon, as they say in the USA". The regime exploited this by a tacit bargain, asking urban Serbs not to object to the Bosnian campaign; in return, these Serbs were not mobilised to fight. "Accompanied by rabid propaganda that those poor Bosnian Serbs were in peril, the demand was met," said Vasic. "Everyone knows what happened there and at the same time nobody wants to know. Psychologically, it is extremely interesting, and a situation of great strain which finally achieves a confusion in the Serbs' own heads."

A confusion to which the main opposition parties have richly added by denouncing Milosevic but not expansionism, I said. "Ah," sighed Vasic, "books will one day be written about the dreadfulness of our opposition."

Attempts to contrive a flag and emblem for this "third Yugoslavia" keep failing, and not by chance. In the ideological welter of Belgrade 1993, mnemonics of Yugoslav continuity sit alongside more vivid and audible signs of Serbism rampant. Cassettes of chetnik songs from the second world war are sold along the main shopping street; new political

Associated Press

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Beyond sanctions? Slobodan Milosevic is still seen as the peerless champion of national interests despite the west's efforts

folksongs in praise of the current war can be heard around the clock on the radio. Yet there has been no official rehabilitation of the chetnik movement. Indeed, state television has been leaning the other way, noting anniversaries of partisan battles and so forth.

"To know what's happening in Serbia," someone told me, "watch Studio B news. [Studio B is the only independent channel, restricted to Belgrade and its environs.] To know what will happen next, watch state television news." So it proved again, with the banishment of the Radical Party from Milosevic's favour at the end of September.

What the Radicals and their leader Vojislav Seselj, a self-proclaimed chetnik "duke", represent is the *de facto* legitimacy of fascist methods, including the massacre of Croat and Bosnian civilians, and state-televised attacks on disobedient journalists.

Sponsored from on high, Seselj overreached. he wanted a portfolio and a TV channel. Even at the cost of parliamentary elections at which a majority of the voters will surely do their master's bidding again—Milosevic must be glad to have ditched the Radicals, if only because they are too *principled* to be reliable as tools. The evil project to make a greater Serbia has always been, for the dictator and his Socialist Party, a ploy to widen their power, or at least to keep it. With sanctions pushing them to end the war and disown their wilder allies, Seselj is more useful in disgrace—and as a candidate for future show-trials of war criminals. This also explains why Milosevic is sifting out the overreachers among rebel leaders in "Krajina".

The day after Seselj's fall from grace, the Socialist Party's youth wing held a press conference, shown on state television that night. The youth leader rattled through her attack on the chetnik duke in a voice like a machine gun. Her name is Dusanka Djogo, a Hercegovinan surname.

In a conflict characterised by "the ritual slaughter of cities" (the title of a heartbreaking essay by Bogdan Bogdanovic), Belgrade has fared well. Its population, though, is much changed; as educated Belgraders flee abroad, a new class arrives from the provinces. Urbanity, a solvent of primitivism, itself dissolves under impact of what might be named the Djogo Principle. As well as Dusanka, there are Risto Djogo, a journalist on the Bosnian Serb television news who specialises in insulting Muslims; and Gojko Djogo, once jailed for anti-Tito poems and now a beastly nationalist politician. I don't know if they are related, but their outlook and roots lie in the same Hercegovinan village.

Empty cafés, shops often bare except for apples, biscuits and beer, occasional milk, crowds for petrol-starved public transport: the degradation of Belgrade life expresses a political decay that began long before the Djogos rose to fame, perhaps with Tito's purge of liberal Serbian communist leaders in 1972.

I saw one of these leaders, Latinka Perovic, give a talk about nationalism to the Belgrade Circle. Her incontrovertible argument is that Yugoslavia was a liberal idea and a state that could have survived only by mutual and complementary development of all its peoples. Perovic is a dignified, heartening figure; inevitably, though, the audience were the very people who don't need to hear her.

It is important for the future that the Belgrade Circle of liberal intellectuals keeps meeting each weekend. But Milosevic has taught the liberal intelligentsia a brutal lesson in political realities. These people can say, publish and broadcast (not on state channels!) whatever they want. It makes no difference to the regime, and it looks good from abroad.

In the geometry of Serbian power, the Belgrade Circle is enclosed within a much larger hoop binding the masses to the ruling party. Forged in the late 1980s, this steel hoop was intact before open war began in 1991. War has since tempered the steel, not damaged it.

The forgery was to convince the masses that the sole significant political issue was the Serb national question. It was achieved by a full broadside of propaganda methods. Artists and intellectuals echoed the simple message from the bureaucracy: Serbia and Serbs must be united at any cost.

Electronic media plus folklore values made an unbeatable team in a country where 70 per cent of the people have no more than elementary schooling. Outside the Belgrade Circle and the largely Belgrade-bound independent media, the language of politics is time-warped, pickled in myths. I wasn't surprised by the taxi driver who insisted that "the Croats have hated the Serbs for 500 years"; but what about the journalist from *Borba* (Serbia's best daily) who asked if Britain is worried by the emergent Serbo-Russian Orthodox bloc? What about the woman in the post office queue who rebuked the person behind her for complaining to a foreigner (me) about national delusions of rightfulness? "Are you a Serb?" she asked. "Then you should shut up and bear everything like the rest of us."

The evil project to make a greater Serbia has always been, for the dictator, a ploy to widen his power

Latinka Perovic calls for Serbia to undergo "a ruthless self-analysis". Slight native resources for this task gleam deep beneath the topical slag. The original Serbian socialists and avant-gardists opposed chauvinism and ignorance earlier this century. Browsing in a bookshop, I found some recent memoirs by a Belgrade surrealist poet of the 1920s and 1930s. "Essentially the same struggle to liberate human thought now passes to new generations," he writes on the last page, "this time struggling against the unattainability of life and existence." By such usage the great word *liberate* is redeemed from those who apply is to captured and devastated territory.

Mark Thompson is preparing a report for "Article 19" about media and war in former Yugoslavia

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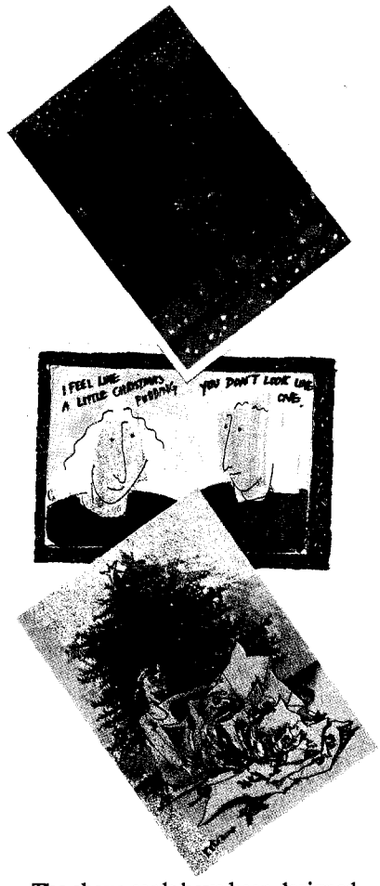

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The Tories' anti-social engineering

Opportunity 2000 has been celebrating its second birthday in the very week that two of Britain's most prominent women have been getting it in the neck. No, not Harriet Harman and Ann Clwyd, but Barbara Mills and Ros Hepplewhite.

If every criminal loves Barbara Mills, who runs the Crown Prosecution Service, every father hates Ros Hepplewhite, the head of the Child Support Agency. Since most MPs have fathered children (some without realising it, as Clare Short mischievously suggested in the Commons a while back), Hepplewhite is particularly short of defenders. Although the Labour Party has been leading the attack, Conservative backbenchers have been happy to join in.

MPs' mailbags have been filling up with protests from angry fathers whose maintenance bills have suddenly trebled or quadrupled. Earlier this week, Hepplewhite gave the Social Security Select Committee a patient but dry-as-dust account of how she was only obeying government orders.

In her shoes, I would have been tempted to leap from my chair and cry in frustration, "But you knew what was going to happen all along." The whole point of the Child Support Agency was to get absent fathers to pay more. Far from crying foul, MPs on all sides were falling over themselves to say what a splendid idea it was.

The Child Support Act sailed through the House of Commons in 1991. MPs were only interested in the broad principles rather than details, and who could object to making fathers more responsible?

The white paper, *Children Come First*, was launched when Margaret Thatcher still had a few months to go as prime minister. She had two aims: to shore up the family and save the state money. The idea was that increased payments by fathers would serve both purposes.

In the long term, the Tories hoped to change men's behaviour. Feckless types would come to realise that they could no longer father children and expect the taxpayer to foot the bill. But, for the time being, it was just as important for fathers who were already paying maintenance to do more for their children where the mother was on benefit.

Somewhere along the line, MPs got their wires crossed. They may have been fooled by the term "absent father". It summons up the image of an absconder, but it actually refers to all men who do not live with their children. They may be as loving and dutiful as any live-in parent. Ministers did not help matters by playing up the stereotype of the man who scatters his seed and leaves.

All the same, it was clear from the white paper onwards that "responsible" fathers were going to be clobbered. How else was the Treasury going to save any money? When Ros Hepplewhite was appointed to her job, she warned that tens of thousands of men were in for a shock.

In an interview in the *Guardian* a year ago, she said: "One of the big misconceptions I am fighting is that the agency is engaging in some moral crusade to punish feckless fathers or irresponsible behaviour. In fact, the agency makes no moral judgments whatsoever. Many fathers who have been entirely responsible in paying maintenance under existing arrangements will find that their bills are significantly increased. Many so-called feckless fathers, who perhaps have re-partnered or have low incomes, will not have to pay maintenance at all."

This is exactly what has happened. As Hepplewhite told the Social Security Select Committee, the Child Support Agency has been operating within "a very clear framework" agreed long before its launch. New cases were to take highest priority, because the courts are giving up the power to assess maintenance. But next in line were cases where the father was already paying something and the mother was on benefit.

The Child Support Agency is not the devil incarnate, as ill-informed MPs would have it

It is men in this category who are howling in pain. They have a genuine grievance. Their bills have shot up overnight, sometimes by staggering amounts. After the poll tax debacle, the government should know better than to ask people to stump up hundreds of pounds at short notice.

The sums themselves, however, are not that unreasonable. Many of the hard-luck stories that have come to light involve men who have been used to paying no more than £25-£35 a week for their child. It is not much for those in work, particularly when you consider that single mothers have often had to abandon paid employment and give up their careers after giving birth. Seven out of ten single mothers stay at home on income support, often against their will, because they cannot afford childcare. So who is making the greatest sacrifice here?

Figures released a year ago by the Department of Social Security suggested that the average maintenance bill would double from £25 to £48 once the Child Support Agency began its work. Where the man was earning more, that figure could easily quadruple. There were headlines to this effect at the time: "Absent fathers face a four-fold increase in maintenance," the *Daily Telegraph* warned. But it is only now that MPs have begun to sit up and demand transitional relief so that fathers can plan their budgets, especially those with second families.

The entire fiasco is the government's fault for being too greedy. It wanted to save £530 million in benefits. Hence the high bills, the short notice and the instruction to Agency staff to go for "soft" targets. Ros Hepplewhite did not dream this up; ministers did.

There is nothing wrong in principle with having a set formula for maintenance payments. In the past, settlements varied widely according to the whim of judges, who were often inclined to treat their own sex leniently. It is a pity that the Child Support Agency has, in turn, behaved inflexibly. It has also been wrong to disregard completely "clean break" settlements, where separation has been accompanied by a one-off payment or gift of property. But it is not the devil incarnate, as ill-informed male MPs would have it.

Unfortunately, the Child Support Agency lacks friends. This is because voluntary groups, such as Gingerbread and the Child Poverty Action Group, see it as a clumsy and insensitive government mechanism for saving money. It cannot be emphasised often enough that, in the case of single mothers on benefits, it is the state that gets the fathers' money. Women up and down the country are having to answer intrusive, personal questions about past relationships, so that the DSS can pay them less.

Women get nothing from this arrangement. On the contrary, they risk having their benefit docked by up to 20 per cent if they refuse to name the father of their child. Hard-luck stories about this may emerge once the Agency gets round to chasing absconders in large numbers. A new poverty trap is also in the making. Women who have to give up their benefits on receiving maintenance also lose their right to free school meals for their children, eye and dental check-ups and prescriptions, leaving them potentially worse off.

So everyone is against the Child Support Agency. Michael Portillo and Peter Lilley take note: it shows what can happen when you try to mix cost-cutting with social engineering.

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SIDELINERS

John Smith has underlined his continuing commitment to the advancement of women and the European ideal by putting Joyce Quin into the large hole left by George Robertson, as Labour's European spokesperson and number two on foreign affairs.

It is a high-risk strategy, even if the trench warfare over Maastricht is largely behind us. There is little to choose between Quin and Robertson as intelligent and informed union-backed, pro-EC moderates with regional bases. In her case, Tyneside. The stark contrast is in appearance and style. Robertson has the quick humour, rugged build, and street cred to argue his case in a rough Scottish pub. Quin exudes the quiet serenity of a genteel lecturer at a ladies' college.

This impression is not wholly misleading. The daughter of two teachers, she specialised in French at Durham University. After a three-year stint in the Labour Party's international department, she lectured for four years on European Studies at Bath University, then for three years on French and politics at Durham University.

The risk is whether Quin's style of calm persuasion can stand up to the fierce feelings of Euro-sceptics in late-night confrontations when chauvinism and alcohol make male MPs forget the meaning of "honourable gentlemen", as Teresa Gorman's recent book attests. Even "toughies" such as Clare Short have been known to quail at their crude treatment, which Quin has experienced in milder measure.

Despite such obstacles, Quin's calm plausibility has won her safe seats in the European Parliament and the Commons in her native Tyneside, among the most male-chauvinist regions in the UK. She was surprised to win the safe Labour seat of South Tyne and Wear in the European Parliament in 1979 and the similarly safe Commons seat of Gateshead East in 1987.

The secret of her success has been her battling to win benefits for her region. In 1986, she secured increased aid for ailing shipbuilding. In 1987, she backed the government's subsidy to Nissan. In the Commons, she has fought against shipbuilding closures in the hard-hit north east.

This quiet persuasiveness has enabled her to mount the promotion ladder almost unnoticed. Instantly appointed to the Treasury Select Committee in 1987, she took Austin Mitchell's job as assistant spokesperson on the EC and consumer affairs in February 1989, when he was dropped for joining Sky TV. When John Smith took over in April 1992, she became assistant spokesperson for European affairs on Frank Dobson's employment team.

John Smith was able to promote her again last month when she came second among the runners-up in the shadow cabinet elections, with her vote up from 71 to 104 (in contrast to Harriet Harman, down from 135 to 99). *Even if her low-profile technique* escaped media attention, it registered with fellow MPs.

Andrew Roth

EDWARD PEARCE

In the Commons, Ireland's future has reached the point of horrified fascination

The newspapers, acting on information, stress the negotiations that may take place and in whose foothills preliminary talks with the Unionists already subsist. But Monday afternoon was about the Hume initiative and the talks that will not take place.

The whole Irish issue, which has reached the point of horrified fascination, was coupled with the rest of EC business in which Teddy Taylor and about 12 other people are interested, and the auxiliary question of Bosnia, worse than Northern Ireland but not our baby, about which Mr Ashdown is still intermittently active—like a non-playing volcano.

Mr Major was as rude to him as he was Castiglione-sweet and solicitous to Mr Hume. The usual moral pronouncement from Paddy, nicely projected, about what we were not doing in Bosnia dropped a cigarette end in a small pool of petrol. Going on like that, said the Prime Minister intemperately, was "contemptible". Mr Ashdown should "stop grandstanding and learn the facts". Mr Major is very clear in his own mind that he has got Bosnia right; substantial aid only matched by France, coupled with refusal to get enmired in a local war with unlimited drag-on potential . . . plus a firm hold of President Clinton's boots whenever he gets these delusions that he is Paddy Ashdown.

There are people being buried this Monday in Northern Ireland who were not born when the first shots were fired

Northern Ireland is our own drag-on war, which has exploited its potential now for 24 years, so long that there are young people being buried this Monday who were not born when the first shots were fired. For the present unimaginable *schlecht* it was Mr Paisley who found the words. Of the Greysteel murders, he said: "They come straight from Hell and they go straight back to Hell." It ought to be said that for all the past rant, Mr Paisley's worst enemies have never thought he had the least sneaking regard for paramilitary action.

Something is up, via Mr Spring and Mr Reynolds, in which Mr Major rests hopes, but he is not going to follow the pattern set by Mr Hume, not least because Mr Paisley (and Mr Molyneaux and the Unionist population) have to be brought along. There isn't any point in doing it if they aren't, somethingthat people sniping about parliamentary numbers, ignore.

But the language is instructive. John Major saluted Mr Hume's courage, and then later in the exchanges stressed fervently that the esteem was real, not a form of civility. And, indeed, a mutual regard exists between the two men: they both believe in corridor power, the hand on the elbow, the adjusted second sentence of a communiqué and the broad therapy of the soft answer. Such a soft answer has tremendous duty to do in Northern Ireland.

Mr Hume spoke with great, if subdued, passion. He had been engaged in affairs in the province these 25 years. He knew a little about it and was convinced that his talks represented the best chance for peace. But Mr Hume has talked too much lately of an EC involvement, not more enticing to Unionists (and Tories) than that of Mr Adams?

The Hume-Adams option, for all the courtliness of exchanges, had not been bought . . . in that form. As an Irish colleague put it, "There's been a big step forward. It used to be, 'We won't talk with them if they are violent.' Now it's, 'We will talk with them if they stop the violence.'" As Frank Carson says, "It's the way you tell them".

It was an exceptionally good afternoon for Mr Major. Diplomacy is his thing and he walks easily between the cracks. But there was a touch of unusual confidence, notably the putting down of a Dennis Skinner rant, "That was as ever, as lucid as it was almost entirely wrong." And he regularly broke quite free of ministerspeak: "If I had to talk to the terrorists, it would turn my stomach over."

He has read the Hume plan obviously, though he does not say so. He has ruled out direct contact with the IRA itself, and is categorical enough about such company to keep the confidence of the Unionists, which confidence is a building block in whichever edifice is being prepared at one-remove in concert with the government of the Republic.

One is conscious of a house of smoke, of a grand ambiguity. Talks are good; talks with the killers are bad. The Unionists are an obstacle to Mr Hume's version; but the Unionists just imaginably might, on least worst option grounds, be parties to whatever Mr Major intends. That is what the smoke says.

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The new European super-state totally lacks democratic accountability, and is obsessed with constructing an iron curtain around itself, says **Tony Bunyan**

Jeux sans frontières: it's a lock-out

Michael Stephens/Press Association

British National Party supporters celebrate electoral success in Millwall, East London

The Maastricht treaty finally came into effect this week and, with it, the European state. The plethora of *ad hoc* groups created since 1976—the Trevi group, the Ad Hoc Group on Immigration, the Coordinators of Free Movement and all their working parties—are to disappear and be replaced by permanent committees and agencies based in Brussels. But the intergovernmental basis of these *ad hoc* arrangements, which excludes the European Parliament and ensures the secrecy of their proceedings, is preserved.

The new structures have been worked out by state officials in secret and then agreed by interior ministers of the 12 states of the European Community. Police officers, customs and immigration officials, members of the special branches and internal security services and civil servants from the interior and justice ministries have developed new structures and agencies to counter the perceived "threats" to public order and internal security posed by terrorism, immigration and drugs, all seen as inextricably linked. The external "enemy", the peoples of the third world and eastern Europe, threaten political stability and economic harmony. A Euro-racism has emerged that legitimises the exclusion of refugees and asylum-seekers and the second-class status of black and third-world migrants resident within the EC. This ideology, in turn, fuelled the growth of racist and fascist groups in the EC.

The Trevi group, the first of these intergovernmental groups involving the 12 EC states, was set up at a meeting of the EC Council in Luxembourg in 1976 at the behest of the then

Recent years have seen a worrying increase in the number of far-right and neo-Nazi groups operating in Europe. **Liz Fekete** provides a guide to the fascist labyrinth

Austria

The Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPÖ, Austrian Freedom Party), founded in 1955 and led since 1986 by Jörg Haider, is Austria's third largest party. It stands for pan-German nationalism and is anti-immigration. Until February, it had 33 seats in parliament (16.6 per cent of the vote), but now five MPs have left, claiming the FPÖ is too extreme, to form a rival party. Last winter, the FPÖ launched its "Austria First Petition", a 12-point programme calling for tightening of Austria's refugee laws, identity cards for foreigners, and quotas on the numbers of foreign children in classrooms. More than 400,000 people signed it, which means there will be a parliamentary debate. In January, the FPÖ won 20 per cent of the vote in municipal elections in Graz, Austria's second-largest city.

There have been several fire-bombings of refugee hostels in the past two years. After an attack on one centre in Gutenstein, near Vienna, in September 1992, the mayors of Salzburg and Vienna did not condemn the violence, but announced instead that they would take in no more refugees.

Belgium

The Vlaams Blok (VB, Flemish Bloc), founded in 1979 and led by Karel Dillen, is Flemish nationalist and anti-immigration. In the 1991 elections, it won 12 seats in the Chamber of Representatives and five in the senate (6.6 per cent of the vote). The VB has one MEP. In 1992, the VB published "Immigration: the solutions", a 70-point strategy based on Jean-Marie Le Pen's programme.

The Front National (FN, National Front), founded in 1983 and led by Daniel Feret, campaigns against immigration and for strong law-and-order policies, and is a sister organisation to the French FN. It has one seat in the Chamber of Representatives.

There are also several small neo-Nazi and skinhead groups involved in attacks on left and immigrant targets. In March, three neo-Nazis were prosecuted for paramilitary activities after being found in possession of weapons. There have been several incidents of racial violence in areas where the far-right is active, particularly in Antwerp.

Czech Republic

In the Czech Republic, the Republican Party, led by Miroslav Sladek and inspired by the German party of the same name, calls for expulsion of Vietnamese and Cuban guest workers and the resettlement of gypsies. In June 1992 elections, it gained 6 per cent of the Czech vote.

Skinhead activity is increasing, particularly around the growing neo-Nazi music scene, and at least 12 gypsies died in racist violence in 1992 in Czechoslovakia. Vietnamese workers and African students also complain of harassment.

Denmark

The Fremskridtsparteit (Progress Party), founded in 1972 and led by Mogens Glistrup, backs expulsion of all Muslims and refugees. Since 1988, when it won 16 seats in parliament, its influence has declined rapidly and it is no longer represented in parliament.

There are also several small neo-Nazi organisations, most notably the Partiet de National (PN, National Party), led by Albert Larsen, which is known to have been involved in attacks on refugee centres and left targets.

Finland

In 1993, the small village of Joensuu witnessed a surge of attacks on Somali refugees

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Labour government represented by home secretary James Callaghan. Its remit was to tackle terrorism through a network of special branches and internal security services, and to encourage police cooperation in a number of fields.

With the creation of the Ad Hoc Group on Immigration (and its many working parties) in 1986, the ground began swiftly to shift. The Rhodes EC Council in 1988 set up the Coordinators Group (misleadingly referred to as the Coordinators of Free Movement). This group comprises 12 senior officials from interior ministries, a chairman, and the vice-president of the European Commission responsible for the internal market. Their report, the Palma Document, adopted in Madrid in 1989, laid the blueprint for the European state and was reflected in the Maastricht treaty agreed in December 1991. The treaty creates two new "pillars": the "second pillar" covering defence and foreign policy (Article J) and the "third pillar" on justice and internal affairs (Article K) (the "first pillar" being economic and social affairs).

The Palma Document also set out the need for a system of surveillance at external borders, "combating clandestine immigration networks" and for the compilation of a list of those "wanted" and "inadmissible". In June 1990, the Trevi ministers said that the priority was to tackle "terrorism, drug trafficking or any forms of crime including organised illegal immigration" because aliens are likely to "compromise public order".

The Trevi Group and the Schengen countries (the nine EC states excluding the UK, Ireland and Denmark) drew up lists of countries whose nationals will require visas to enter—all third-world and eastern European countries. The rationale was that those arriving at the EC's borders are "economic migrants". The concept of entry based on need, which strips racism from the argument, has never been on the agenda. Instead, a House of Lords select committee could speak of the need to construct a "*cordon sanitaire*" around the external borders of the EC.

The first formal measure was the Dublin Convention (1990), which introduced the one-stop rule, which allows asylum seekers to apply for residence only in one EC country—the decision of this country being binding on all. This policy has now been extended to central and eastern Europe through a parallel convention.

Most reports are not officially available: the House of Commons has never debated these developments

The External Borders Convention followed later in 1990 but has yet to be signed by EC governments because of a disagreement between the UK and Spain over the status of Gibraltar. Under this convention, a visa policy is to be set out including criteria for excluding people and the logging of "undesirables" on the proposed computerised database, the European Information System (EIS). In December 1992, a number of resolutions, which are intended to be incorporated into national legislation, were agreed on "manifestly unfounded" asylum applications and so-called "safe" third countries to which people could be returned.

With these measures in place to exclude migrants from the EC, the member states turned their attention to internal controls to track down illegal immigrants within the EC (agreed in June 1993).

The UK, which led the field of immigration control with its Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act, has been quick to act on this issue. On 13 October, Home Secretary Michael Howard announced that there was to be a coordinated multi-agency drive against "illegal" immigrants, with the exchange of information between immigration officials, the police, the Department of Social Security, the Employment Service, the Health Service and housing authorities.

These EC-wide policies on policing, internal security, customs, legal harmonisation and immigration have been drafted and discussed by state officials and ministers without any open, democratic debate. Most of the reports are not officially available and only brief summaries are given in published documents. During 1991 and 1992 there were a total of 227 recorded secret meetings of *ad hoc* groups. In the UK, the House of Commons has never debated these developments and is limited to an anodyne written answer, every six months, in response to a "planted" question.

When it comes to conventions, the archaic procedure of the "Ponsonby rules" for ratifying treaties applies in the UK. This meant that the Dublin Convention was "laid" before parliament—placed on the daily order paper—leaving it to an eagle-eyed MP to realise what was planned, and even here there is no certainty of a debate. Parliament was

and Bangladeshi students. After a fight between Somalis and Finns, the police, who had previously ignored reports of racist violence, arrested just one Somali who allegedly used a knife during the fight and was subsequently jailed for one year.

France

The Front National (FN, National Front), founded in 1972 and led by Jean-Marie Le Pen, is anti-Arab and anti-Semitic, calling for an end to the "Islamification" of France and the repatriation of "immigrants".

Although the FN gained 12.5 per cent of the vote in the March 1993 general election, it does not have any seats in parliament. Since the 1992 local elections, the FN has had 239 councillors across France. There are ten FN MEPs.

Racial harassment is widespread. In 1992, the Federation Internationale de Droits des Hommes accused police of "endemic and most shocking behaviour", mostly in their abuse of identity-check powers. In January 1993, the Council of Europe Commission on the Prevention of Torture urged the French government to tighten procedures to protect suspects after hearing numerous allegations of police brutality. Two North African youths died in 1992 after confrontations with police. Three North African youths were killed in May 1993.

Germany

The Republikaner (Republican Party), founded in 1983 and led by Franz Schönhuber, stands for pan-German nationalism and is anti-immigration. Following state elections in April 1992, the Republikaner has 15 seats in state parliaments, and the party has one member of the Bundestag (a defector from the Christian Democrats). In March 1993 local elections in Hesse, the party won 8 per cent of the vote. Subsequently in Frankfurt, it won ten seats on the city council with 9.3 per cent of the vote.

The Deutsche Volksunion (DVU, German People's Union), founded in 1987 and led by Gerhard Frey, is neo-fascist. It won only 0.2 per cent of the vote in the March 1993 local elections, but is reported to have 23,000 members.

The Federal Office of Criminal Investigation says that 77 right-wing extremist organisations with a total membership of more than 40,000 are being kept under observation. Four organisations were banned in 1993.

The attacks by 200 neo-Nazis on a refugee hostel in Rostock in August 1992 marked the start of a nationwide wave of violence against refugees. At least 22 people died in 1992 in far-right inspired killings, including Turks, refugees, left-wing activists, and homeless and disabled people.

Hungary

Istvan Csurka, renowned for anti-Semitic statements, was finally expelled from the ruling Hungarian Democratic Forum in June 1993, along with three other right-wing MPs. Csurka now leads a new party, Magyar Ut (Hungarian Way), which has called for the creation of a "Hungarian Christian nation-state with folk-roots".

There has also been growing concern about skinhead violence since October 1992 when skinheads dressed in Arrow Cross uniform (the pre-war indigenous fascist party) disrupted a ceremony commemorating the Hungarian uprising of 1956.

There has been a spate of racial violence against gypsies, the worst a series of arson attacks on gypsy homes in Ketegyhaza, on the Hungarian plain, last year. Last November, 53 Sudanese university students left the country saying they feared physical attack.

Italy

The Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI, Italian Social Movement), founded in 1946 and led by Gianfranco Fini, the political descendant of Mussolini, is nationalist, anti-communist and anti-immigration. Since the April 1992 elections it has had 34 seats in parliament.

The Lega Nord (Northern League), founded in 1982 and led by Umberto Bossi, is a re-

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Riotous times: a German neo-Nazi rioter in Rostock last year

Camera Press

silent on the adoption of the Dublin Convention.

Under the Maastricht treaty, the work of the *ad hoc* groups is to be taken over by the "K4 Committee"—a committee composed of the officials in the Coordinators Group. It will be based in the EC Council building in Brussels, paid for out of the EC budget, and will report to a new Council of Justice and Internal Affairs Ministers (the council is the body that represents the 12 EC governments). It will remain intergovernmental—with the European Parliament being limited to asking questions.

The computerised European Information System (EIS) will not be limited to immigration matters. It will also cover police and security records and intelligence (customs officials are to have their own computer system, which will be linked to the EIS).

The convention to set up the EIS is likely to be the subject of some controversy. The nine Schengen countries are insisting that the convention should be exactly the same as the one covering the Schengen Information System (SIS) and that the EIS should be based in Strasbourg (where the SIS, which is due to go live on 1 December, is based). The three non-Schengen countries—the UK, Ireland and Denmark—are being told they have to accept a convention on the EIS that neither governments or parliaments can amend in any way.

Alongside the K4 Committee and the EIS, there is CIREA (the centre for the exchange of information on asylum); CIREFI (centre for the exchange of information on the crossing of borders and immigration) and Europol

[redacted] with a strong anti-southerner, anti-foreigner streak. Having initially advocated secession, it now proposes a federal structure for Italy. In the April 1992 general election, it won 55 seats and took 17.5 per cent of the vote in the north; in December, it took between 37 and 46 per cent of the vote in the north in local elections; and in June this year it gained control of all the major city councils in the north, apart from Turin.

There are also several small neo-Nazi parties and, earlier this year, police carried out a series of raids directed against neo-Nazi skinhead groups in Rome, Milan and the Veneto region.

Racial violence is on the increase, and there have been several organised neo-Nazi actions against irregular workers and gypsies as well as desecration of Jewish cemeteries. In Caserta in June, after a shopkeepers' strike against immigrants organised in part by the MSI, there were several arson attacks against the property of black people. The next month, there was a wave of attacks on Asians and Africans in Genoa.

Netherlands

The Centrum Demokraten (CD, Democratic Centre), founded in 1986 and led by Hans Janmaat, is a far-right anti-immigration party which has links with the Belgian VB. Polls suggest that, if elections were held now, it would gain 3 per cent of the national vote. In the 1990 local elections, the CD won 15 council seats, principally in Rotterdam, Amsterdam and the Hague.

There are also several small neo-Nazi groups and a skinhead neo-Nazi music scene has emerged around the fanzine *Hou Kontakt* (*Keep in Touch*).

Racial violence is on the increase. Early last year there was a spate of bomb attacks against migrant organisations and mosques, and physical attacks on foreigners are increasing in frequency.

Norway

The Fremskrittsparteit (Progress Party), founded in 1973 and led by Carl Hargen, stands for stronger immigration controls. Party officials recently argued that only Christian immigrants should be allowed into Norway, urging the "return" of all refugees to their home countries. In the September 1993 election, the party's seats in parliament dropped from 22 to ten and it took 6.3 per cent of the vote.

Norway has several small neo-Nazi groups. Recent racial attacks include the bombing of an immigrant school near Oslo, carried out by skinhead groups.

Poland

There is no far-right electoral party in Poland, although anti-Semitism is widespread in public life. There are several neo-Nazi groups, including the openly anti-Semitic Stronnictwo Narodowe (SN, National Party) and a splinter group from the SN, the SN-Szczerbiec, which accepts as members only Christian Poles. The Polish National Community—Polish National Party, led by Boleslaw Tejkowski, claims 4,000 members and uses skinheads in hit squads. German neo-Nazis have been accused of agitating among the 350,000 ethnic Germans in Poland for a German takeover of Upper Silesia.

In October 1992, Polish Nazis beat to death a German lorry driver near Cracow. There have also been several desecrations of Jewish cemeteries.

Portugal

There is no far-right electoral party of significance in Portugal. Among small neo-Nazi groups, the Circulo Europeo de Amigos de Europa (CEDADE, European Circle of Friends of Europe) is probably the most important.

Although Portugal does not experience the same levels of racial violence as much of the rest of Europe, racial harassment does exist. Last year, Africans complained of being too frightened to go out at night because of skinhead attacks. Skinhead violence had previously, in 1990, led to a government

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(an EC police intelligence office). The work of the *ad hoc* Judicial Cooperation working groups that are seeking to "harmonise" a whole series of legal conventions completes the picture.

The emergence of these new structures cannot be attributed simply to increased "supranational" or "transnational" cooperation. The move from *ad hoc* cooperation to permanent institutions and agencies signals the creation of a European state, a state very different to the national states of the EC. The usual tenets of "liberal democracy" do not hold. The notion of the "separation of powers" between the executive, the legislature—backed by an independent civil service—and the judiciary simply do not apply.

This state has been conceived by governments, honed by state officials, and passed back to governments to agree. Parliaments—national and European—have been bypassed. National parliaments are asked to ratify conventions but they cannot amend them. Resolutions and agreements agreed by the EC states setting out new policies do not even require parliamentary approval. The effect of these conventions, "resolutions" and "agreements" are in almost every instance to diminish people's m rights.

The legitimacy of this new state is limited to having the approval of governments and state officials. Unparalleled power resides in the hands of officials with the freedom to act without the constraints of parliamentary democracy. No mechanisms for democratic accountability or due process of law to protect the citizen are built into the new structures (after all, people and parliaments played no part in framing them).

The lack of public awareness of the enormity of these changes is due not just to the secrecy with which this state has been created. It has been aided by the collusion of both the media, which have failed to invigilate on behalf of the citizen and, by an almost total absence of critical political interest, liberal or otherwise.

A handful of groups like Statewatch and the Institute of Race Relations' European Race Audit are working with others in Europe to monitor these developments. Whether we will see the emergence of a European-wide movement to call the new state to account—one which is grounded in the community, learns from the fight against racism and fascism, and brings in those concerned with law and civil liberties, citizenship and democracy—remains an open question.

Tony Bunyan edited "Statewatching the new Europe: a handbook on the European state", which has just been published by Statewatch, PO Box 1516, London N16 0EW, at £4.50 including postage

Tim Ockenden/Press Association

Leader of the pack: the French Front National's leader, Jean-Marie Le Pen

committee to monitor the situation of minorities in Portugal. Concern over fascist influences among football supporters has emerged.

Romania

Right-wing nationalism is on the rise in Romania, and anti-Semitism and anti-gypsy feeling are widespread in public life. The leader of the extreme-right Romania Mare (Greater Romania Party), Corneliu Vadim Tudor, wrote an open letter to President Ion Iliescu in April 1993 criticising him for attending the opening ceremony of the Holocaust museum in Washington, which he described as "Satan's home". The High Court has forbidden the distribution of the first Romanian translation of *Mein Kampf*.

Spain

There is no electoral party of the far right in Spain but there are many groups nostalgic for the Franco era, including the Circulo Espanol de Amigos de Europa (CEDADE, Spanish Circle of Friends of Europe), founded in 1965, which organises the annual Franco parade. The Frente Nacional (FN, National Front), founded in 1986 and led by Blas Pinar, is probably the largest of the extreme-right parties and claims to have 1,000 councillors in Spain elected as independents.

Neo-Nazi skinhead groups have recently been discovered organising among football fans, and attacks on gypsies and immigrant workers have become more commonplace. In October 1992, the mayor and ten members of the ruling council of Mancha Real were jailed for their part in an attack in which six houses belonging to gypsy families were burnt down by an angry mob.

Sweden

The Sverige Demokrateerna (SD, Swedish Democrats), founded in 1988 and led by Anders Klarstrom, is an anti-immigration electoral party that has failed to make an impact at the polls, winning only 5,000 votes in the September 1992 general election.

Other far-right groups include Vit Ariskt Motstand (VAM, White Aryan Resistance), which has been responsible for bombings and racial attacks. Although VAM has no official connection with the SD, VAM members have acted as stewards on SD demonstrations.

Switzerland

There is no far-right electoral party in Switzerland, although the right-populist Swiss Democrats (formerly National Action), who have five seats on the National Council, are known for their anti-immigrant stance, and the anti-communist Automobile Party, which has eight seats on the National Council, is associated with campaigns against asylum-seekers.

There are several small neo-nazi groups, some of which have been involved in attacks on refugee centres, and racial violence is on the increase.

United Kingdom

The small, openly neo-Nazi British National Party (BNP) put up candidates in the 1992 general election with no success (as did the even smaller National Front). But the BNP has built up a base in certain areas of white discontent, most notably in the Isle of Dogs in East London, where it won its first ever council seat last month.

There are also several other small neo-Nazi groups, notably Blood and Honour, which mobilises young neo-Nazis, mostly skinheads, around racist music bands, and Combat 18, which has made a speciality of attacking left targets.

There is widespread racial violence across Britain. In 1992, ten people died in racially motivated incidents, including two refugees. Recent research by the London Research Centre indicates that one in ten ethnic minority households in London has suffered racial harassment.

Liz Fekete is a researcher at the Institute of Race Relations. This article is based on one in "Statewatching the New Europe"

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LETTERS

"The New Statesman played an important role in securing homosexual law reform. Indeed, there was a time, in the 1960s, when the campaign for reform was run from its offices," writes Edgar Sutton, of Canterbury. "So it was all the more interesting to read the brief extract last week ('40 years ago') from Kingsley Martin's first published musings on the subject.

"That extract prompted me to look up the original article ('Society and the homosexual', 31 October 1953). It was a liberal, rational deliberation on what was still largely a subject that 'dare not speak its name'. But as the extract you published made clear, Martin saw the decriminalisation of homosexual acts as part of a programme to reduce homosexuality, not as a means of freeing people to live in the manner of their choice.

"The first sentence of Martin's article—which you didn't reprint—says it all: 'Like other normal men, I am instinctively repelled by everything connected with homosexuality; and, like other journalists, I avoid discussing it frankly.' When this sort of view was being expressed by one of the doyens of 1950s' liberal opinion, imagine how much more hostile were attitudes in society at large. At a time when the legal and attitudinal changes that took place in the 1960s are under attack, it is worth making comparisons like these to remind ourselves of the truth of Roy Jenkins' dictum that 'the permissive society is a civilised society'."

There was another throwback in last week's issue, if not to 40 then certainly to 20 years ago. "Who was that handsome, dark-haired young man whose face illustrated John Berger's article ('A photocopy') in last week's NSS?" asks Christine Wainwright, of Leeds. Yes, it was John Berger—not, I'm afraid, possessed of the secret of eternal youth, but as he appeared in a rather old photograph, which happened to find itself resurrected from the NSS archives. It's appearance is probably the perfect subject for an article by Berger himself.

I noticed, incidentally, in referring back to that 1953 issue, that Berger was one of the other contributors that week. The subject was a "Football and Fine Arts Exhibition". Berger described a visitor to the exhibition who exclaimed "Foul! Foul! Foul!" in front of picture after picture. "For a moment I thought this was aesthetic criticism," he wrote. "But it was the cry of a referee: a player barging another who hadn't got the ball; an offside; a trip." The pictures, it seemed, had been composed with little attention to the rules of the game.

There were only two people who broke the rules of the game at last Sunday's Defence Fund football match: myself and NSS star right-winger (in the footballing sense), Susan Hayes. I lasted 20 minutes before a broken thumb (and no magic sponge) got the better of me, but managed to leave our team with a healthy two-goal deficit, which they spent the next 70 minutes contriving to reduce to 2-1. My return as referee, however, allowed me to overlook an eccentric throw-in technique by Hayes, who obviously thought she was appearing for the cricket team. Our thanks to everyone who turned out.

Pressures on space mean there is no Defence Fund page this week. The good news, however, is that we are now within £70,000 or so of our target. In combination with the prospect of a refinancing deal that could put NSS on the firmest financial footing it has enjoyed for some years, that makes for very encouraging news indeed, and almost compensates for Sunday's defeat at football.

There will be more about all of this next week. In the meantime, I understand, and sympathise with, the complaints of all those readers who feel that NSS hasn't been keeping them in touch with what's going on, and that, as one of them put it this week, "We learn more from the Guardian than in the pages of NSS itself." I hope, however, that you will appreciate at least some of the difficulties, in recent circumstances, in maintaining an entirely free and open flow of information and discussion.

Steve Platt

A drain we could do without

The Northern Ireland problem seems to be enmeshed in illusions. The IRA, to begin with, think they are trying to drive us out of Ireland, when in fact, as *NSS* recognises, we have no desire at all to be in Ireland, and only their own continuing violence forces us to remain, since we cannot in honour simply walk away from the mess our forbears made.

The Unionists, for their part, believe we have an eternal obligation to support a loyal British population, when in fact we recognise little kinship with this stiff-necked people, and every time we see the closed faces of their political spokespeople and hear their self-righteous voices, the urge to turn our backs on the place becomes almost irresistible.

The tragedy of the Ulster Loyalists is that the imperial Protestant Britain that they are loyal to has ceased to exist. At the same time, the backward papistical republic that they fear is also changing out of recognition. In the 1920s and 1940s, the advantages of the Union were overwhelming, even probably for the Catholic minority; but now, what future is there in being a fear-wracked, hate-wracked, capital-starved appendage of an indifferent Britain? And what do the Protestants really have to fear from the Ireland of Dick Spring and Mary Robinson?

The Republic of Ireland has no desire to annex the north, and many constitutional possibilities are open. The one option that is not acceptable is an indefinite status quo. For us, this would be intolerable, not only because of the drain in lives and money, but also because the Ulster war legitimises a military and security apparatus that is a potential threat to our own democracy.

But what hope is there really, when John Cole ("Reading between the lines", 29 October), whose writings on British politics are unfailingly moderate and wise, can contribute nothing to the debate about his homeland except stale polemic against Gerry Adams and the Anglo-Irish Agreement?

C C Wrigley
Chorleywood
Herts

Part of the problem

John Cole is a highly respected political commentator, and his column ("Reading between the lines", 29 October) includes not one word of criticism of the parts played by any member or institution of the Unionist community. Its message is entirely negative, and it is unworthy of him.

A vital part of the problem of Northern Ireland is that so many intelligent members of the Unionist commuity wash their hands of Unionist politics, while failing to acknowledge that the nationalist community has, or has ever had, any cause for complaint, or that any resolution of the problem will depend on the willingness of the Unionists to compromise.

By their negative stance behind the Unionist politicians, they imply that they prefer a continuance of the troubles to any prospect of resolution by compromise. John Cole is part of the problem until he acquires the courage to be part of the solution.

Eric E Robinson
Chorley
Lancashire

State of independence

After 25 years of bloodshed in Northern Ireland, not only have their politicians failed miserably but, each time there is a movement towards peace, certain elected representatives deliberately wreck negotiations. The trouble is that both sides keep looking over their shoulders, either to Britain or to the Irish Republic. There is only one way to solve this intractable problem, and that is to turn the province into an independent state, guaranteed by the European Community. A new constitution would have to be drawn up to guarantee minority rights, after which an independent "Northern Ireland" would become a free and equal member of the EC. British troops would then be withdrawn from the new state, and replaced by EC peace-keeping forces.

This idea should be tested by referenda held in Britain, the Irish Republic and Northern Ireland. I am sure that this arrangement would find favour with the British people, and it would rid them of the drain on their exchequer, the bombing of

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their cities and the loss of their soldiers' lives.

Bereft of interference from Britain and Ireland, I believe that both communities would soon weld together, cemented by a common allegiance to their new state. If small populations, such as Latvia, are willing to brave the future as independent states in the economic chaos of eastern Europe, surely the future of an independent Ulster is far more feasible under the umbrella of the European Community.

Sean Healy
Killarney
Ireland

Try and try again

Westminster as a male bastion ("A boys' own story", 29 October) is illustrated not by shadow cabinet voting, but by the furore caused by a Tory MP's new secretarial choice. Louise Hobkison, secretary to Bill Cash MP, has degrees in French and German, and also has an interest in Europe. She also possesses blonde hair, which has sparked headlines such as "Would *you* let *your* husband appoint *this woman* as his secretary?"

Ms Hobkison and Mrs Cash were reduced to a photo-opportunity, bolstering the other's allure and intelligence while the hapless Cash squirmed between the two like the filling in a sandwich. At least Labour is *trying* to create a level playing-field. The other political parties have not sighted a starting block! As with the Sex Discrimination and Equal Opportunities Acts, I believe that Labour *will* get there. The Hobkinson farce should incite Tories and Lib Dems to remove the beam from their own eyes before censuring the mote in ours.

Helen Brinton
Faversham
Kent

THIS ENGLAND

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•You will be aware that Windsor was affected by floods last week [when] I had occasion to send a cheque to my bank in Windsor. This morning I had the letter returned by the Royal Mail. The cheque and paying-in slip were intact, but the envelope was mangled, and on it was written: "Eaten by swans." —Letter to the *Times* (Derek Morgan)

• The old belief that behind every successful man is a hard-working and preferably rich woman is true, sociologists have found. —*Guardian* (Tricia Cusack)

Woman's own confession

It was sad to see Sarah Baxter ("A boys' own story", 29 October), a journalist, chiding the *Guardian* for publishing articles by other women journalists who are opposed to positive discrimination in shadow cabinet elections—particularly as I was one of those politically incorrect females. However, I must confess I had not appreciated until now that not only were all MPs expected to vote for four women, but that it was also expected that they should all vote for four politically correct women.

Ann Carlton
Pembrey
Dyfed

Casting a light on Cruise

In the weeks since E P Thompson's death, newspapers have cast new light on the Cruise deployments of 1983. These first-strike missiles, plus Ronald Reagan's planning for "winning" a nuclear war in Europe, provoked unprecedented protest.

We now know that all this frightened Yuri Andropov, then leader of the Soviet Union, so much that he had both his intelligence services on an unprecedented joint alert for signs of a western nuclear strike. His military were assembling a Doomsday automatic missile launch system in case they suffered a decapitating attack (this was tested in November 1984). Then nuclear bombers were put on alert in East Germany in November 1983.

So surely, if Andropov had not had hopes that any new war would be prevented by mass opposition here, his bombers would have been alerted earlier, longer, and with even less hesitancy? Any airliner straying off course would have let all hell loose. Given that the Nato "vulnerability" then claimed had yet to be remedied, the movement must have been a major factor in restraining Andropov. It was the non-military defence.

Ten years on, we must underline the importance of popular movements at such moments. Otherwise people will be reluctant to challenge an establishment so haunted by its failures in the 1930s that it has learned little since.

Andrew Lydon
Birmingham

Misquotation misfortune

Yet again, *NSS* has completely missed the right target in its "anti-racist" reporting and attacked me (Letters, 19 October). Yet again, this attack is based on *NSS* not checking the facts before bursting into print. In fact, the *Weekly Journal* misquoted me as saying that "the overwhelming majority" of protestors on the 16 October south-east London demonstration "had very little interest in racism . . . they were mostly members of the SWP and other fringe groups who use the Anti-Nazi League as a way to recruit people into their extreme left-wing party".

It is not the case that I said "the overwhelming majority", because that is not my view. I think the *Weekly Journal* journalist was attempting to paraphrase a long quotation in which I said a number of things. The SWP/Anti-Nazi League organisers of the march said in advance that they did not agree with the police route and that they would go where they wanted. This bellicose decision set the scene for a violent confrontation. I also said that the SWP/ANL were principally interested in fighting the Nazis, as their very name conveys, as if it is possible to separate racism from fascism. The ARA opposes both with equal vigour.

Steve Platt quoted extremely selectively from the *Weekly Journal*, which was very critical of the punch-up with the police. For instance, its editorial stated unequivocally: "The Welling ANL demonstration last weekend was organised in effect by the Socialist Workers Party. Marc Wadsworth, head of the Anti-Racist Alliance, has said that this group does not have the interests of black people at heart and that their main agenda is not racism . . . He is right."

NSS should face the fact that the punch-up was a major setback because it allowed the establishment's law-and-order brigade to equate anti-racism with violence.

Marc Wadsworth
National Secretary
Anti-Racist Alliance
London WC1

Tactical policing

Was Steve Platt at the same demonstration as his other media colleagues ("Or was it a police riot?" 22 October)? His description of events does not match most of theirs, nor what I saw as the officer commanding police operations on the day.

I do not intend to demolish every wrong point he makes, easy though that may be, but a selection may be sufficient. He describes my decision to re-route the march as "undemocratic", despite the fact that it was made within the provisions set out by

Min Cooper

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parliament in the Public Order Act 1986. My strategy stated clearly that one of our intentions was to facilitate lawful democratic protest against the evils of racism, but not to the detriment of local people who had made it quite clear from an early stage that they were implacably opposed to any demonstration taking place. The majority of demonstrators were not considered by police to be extremists and were able to exercise their right to protest, choosing to do so lawfully.

Lodge Hill was never blocked by police, but by marchers stopping, turning round and watching the violent confrontation precipitated by a large minority of marchers.

The violence was not limited to a few "light cardboard or plywood placards"; bricks, paving stones and other missiles were thrown, injuring 200 officers. The police charges were aimed at demonstrators ripping up paving blocks in order to deprive them of ammunition. Buckets brought ostensibly to collect money on the route were used to pass bricks from the cemetery wall to the brick-throwers closer to police lines.

The march organisers had made it clear before the event that they intended to march to the BNP bookshop, and there was even talk of demolishing it "brick by brick". It would have been foolish in the extreme not to block off all streets leading to it.

Yes, Mr Platt, our tactics were successful, despite the violence. The people of Welling were protected; there was little damage to property and those intent on breaking the law were thwarted.

David Osland
Deputy Assistant Commissioner
Metropolitan Police
London SE9

Steve Platt replies: I did not write that the only things thrown at police were a few "light cardboard or plywood placards", but that bricks, paving stones and other missiles were only thrown after police horses and riot squads moved into the crowd. As for the claim that Lodge Hill was never blocked by police, I understand that an application has been made for TV film taken on the day. I am sure that this will confirm the evidence of myself and other first-hand observers, who testify that when the demonstration arrived at the crossroads where the disturbances arose, all exits—including the approved police route down Lodge Hill—were blocked by police.

Profit in Cambodia's loss

It was good to see John Pilger exposing the myth of the UN "success" in Cambodia ("A washing of hands in Cambodia", 29 October). Most media coverage of the largest UN operation ever mounted seemed to come to a juddering halt with the "peaceful" elections last May.

It is only in the coming months that the exact nature of what the UN did not achieve in Cambodia will unravel. As the returned refugees exhaust their 400-days' worth of World Food Programme supplies, so more will be forced onto mined land or to move to Phnom Penh and become part of the ever-growing destitute population there.

The failure of donors to fund the Cambodian Mines Action Centre may well be a sign of things to come, with bilateral and multilateral interests only likely to support ventures that will favour themselves. The World Bank and the IMF, as in so many places in the world, look set to lead this process. Humanitarian considerations come low on the agenda when profit is the sole motivating force.

If an asset-stripping of the country proceeds with the gap between rich and poor growing ever wider, there can be but one winner in the long term, and that is the Khmer Rouge. Offering an alternative to corruption and neo-liberalism, this genocidal group could become an increasingly attractive proposition. In this context, it is a chilling thought that 50 per cent of the population of Cambodia is under 15 years old, and so has no recollection of the Pol Pot years.

Liz Yorke
Action Cambodia
London N5

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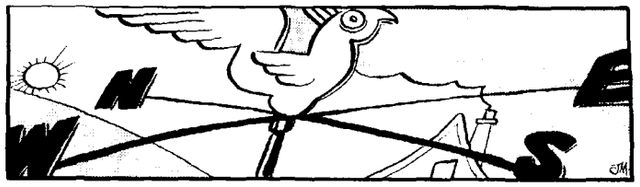

The Leaf Fall Timetable is irresistible for **Colin Ward**

Naturally I was attracted by a poster at Liverpool Street headed "Leaf Fall Timetable" and stopped to read the message. Were there special excursion trains at bargain rates to encourage us to revel in the pleasures of the season, or to soften us for the coming fare increases? November is the month when, in the first two years of the senior citizen's rail-card, sensational reductions were offered.

In the never-repeated first November, card-carriers could have a return ticket to anywhere in the system for £2, and the trains were packed by us oldies with flasks of tea and homemade sandwiches, exploiting the offer to its furthest limits. It was too good to be repeated, but was an object lesson on how to attract people on to trains.

Sadly, all the poster actually said was: "To assist timekeeping during the autumn leaf fall season, most services from Amersham and Chesham will run a few minutes early on Mondays to Fridays."

Life would be more predictable for all of us if the leaves fell to a timetable, but botanists tell us that it depends on any chance pressure from wind or rain. This season was called the "fall" long before the British learned to call it "autumn". The habit has been retained in North America, where it is seen as a time for celebration and rejoicing, rather than as a time for complaint and nostalgia for better times.

Over there, they observe Hallowe'en, rather tediously, as a time to set aside the normal rules of conduct, and a veteran Canadian friend, George Woodcock, records an automatic setting-aside of personal timetables. "During the last days of October, Vancouverites clogged the streets and held up the traffic, driving at 30 kilometres an hour to appreciate the splendour of their city of trees." He explains how "a long summer of blue skies and warm sunlight had so conditioned the leaves that an unexampled range of richness of colour appeared: shades and tints ranged through all the reds and yellows, the rusts and russets, and vermillions and carmines and oranges in a multichromatic feast of light."

It isn't like that in the Thames valley where the trains are starting early in case some citizen should sue under a phony charter. Well over a century ago, Henry Adams had sat out the American civil war in Portland Place, "where winter is dark and winter evenings exceedingly long", as secretary to his father who was the US minister here. Then he went home as "a young man who had just helped to waste five or ten thousand million dollars and a million lives, more or less, to enforce unity and uniformity on people who objected to it". But what struck him most was not the appalling disaster of civil war, but "the overpowering beauty and sweetness of the Maryland autumn, almost unendurable for its strain on one who had toned his life down to the November greys and browns of northern Europe".

So I spent the other evening among the relentlessly falling leaves of cosmopolitan Oxford, discussing why the Leaf Fall Timetable is so much more heartening in North America. One view was that it had to do with the local trees: the oaks and silver or red maples or the sweet gum-trees that, "from September to November are covered with a patchwork of bright scarlet, deep red, green, lemon or purple leaves".

The *diurnal range* was a rival explanation. I was told that the combination of high day temperatures with night frosts led to the leaves keeping the high sugar content that determined their colour in the summer and ensured their clinging to life in the autumn. When it ran out, their tenure expired too. Political analogies hovered over us. American initiatives, from the New Deal to Johnson's Great Society, or in Britain the wartime pressure for social security, had run out of sugar and dropped off the winter of our discontent. In a different season and another year, how can we ensure them a more durable tenure?

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Its biggest customers, Germany and Japan, could pull out. Its safety is under fire. **Crispin Aubrey** on why BNFL's Thorp reprocessing plant might be a dead duck

Thorp in our side

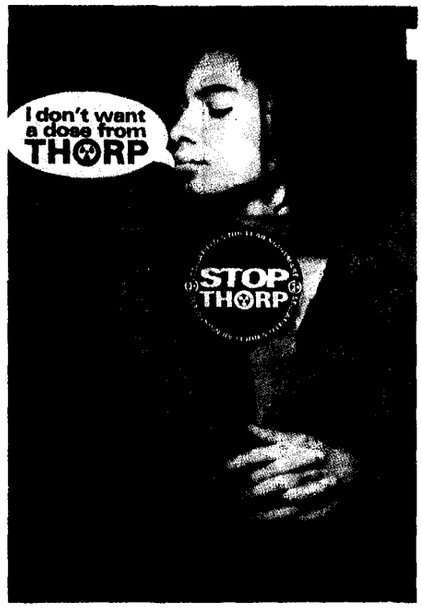
British Nuclear Fuels is a public company. It is therefore in theory open to the increasingly rigorous analysis accorded all state enterprises. But it also operates in what is seen as a strategic industry, one that not only involves a fuel source consistently favoured by British governments, but has ramifications for defence. This ambiguous status has given it an unusual degree of protection during a history peppered with bitter criticism of its activities.

British Nuclear Fuels has tried to counter the waves of bad publicity by spending millions on its own public relations, including opening a £5-million visitors' centre at the site. The issue of the Thorp reprocessing plant itself, however, remained relatively dormant until the late 1980s, when the proposed privatisation of the electricity industry opened up a debate about nuclear economics. The rising costs of reprocessing spent nuclear fuel at Sellafield were a central part of that debate. As the argument developed into whether reprocessing was needed at all in the nuclear fuel cycle, Thorp began to be seen as a potential financial liability.

As a public company operating in a heavily regulated industry, BNFL is involved with a number of governmental departments. Safety of its plant is generally overseen by the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate, part of the Health and Safety Executive. The Department of Health itself is also involved. Transport of nuclear fuels concerns the Department of Transport. BNFL's general policy and investment decisions are supervised by the Department of Trade and Industry, while its finances involve the Treasury. Its military connections bring in the Ministry of Defence. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution, which is responsible to the Department of the Environment, itself works in conjunction with the Ministry of Agriculture over radioactive discharges.

Although not obliged to by law, HMIP can allow a period of public consultation over new authorisations for radioactive discharges. These were submitted for public consultation three months late, in November 1992, and produced an unprecedented torrent of opposition, the majority demanding that a full public inquiry be held. Altogether, over 64,000 objections were registered. They included representations from 108 local authorities. Among these were detailed analyses as to why the discharges would be detrimental to people's health and to the Cumbrian environment. There were 19,000 responses in favour, many from Sellafield workers.

The level of objection to the discharge authorisations inevitably gave the government pause for thought. But this is by no means the only evidence of substantial public opposition to Thorp. The Nordic countries in particular, including Norway, Iceland, Sweden and Denmark, have expressed concern about the increased level of radioactive emissions, especially of krypton. But the Irish government, whose coastline faces Sellafield, has been the most consistent opponent of Thorp. In repeated representations to Britain, especially over accidents at the site, it has stressed the additional risks to the health and safety of the Irish population posed by opening the new plant. Apart from opposing the whole development, it has called for substantial reductions in the proposed discharge levels.



The "Stop Thorp" campaigners stick to their objections

Most recently, in June 1993, the Paris Commission, a European inter-governmental organisation concerned to reduce marine pollution, passed a resolution calling for no new discharges to be allowed from reprocessing plants without a clear justification being made for these, a full assessment made of their impact, and the "best available techniques" being used to reduce them. The resolution was agreed by a clear majority of nine countries, with only one vote, Britain's, firmly against. Failure to comply with its terms will set Britain yet again at odds with its European partners.

With an increasing sense of frustration, British Nuclear Fuels has fought hard against its critics. As other justifications for Thorp have floundered, it has concentrated more and more on the straight economics, and says it is losing £2 million every week because of the delay in opening the plant. "The customers are prepared to send their fuel here for reprocessing and BNFL is prepared to reprocess it," I was told when I visited the plant. During early 1993, BNFL elicited a series of letters of commitment from its overseas customers, including a national newspaper advertisement from the Japanese electricity utilities. On BNFL's side are the trade unions at the plant. The GMBU branch secretary told me that if Thorp didn't open, "you might as well shut the whole place down and walk away". The local councils are firmly behind Thorp because of the jobs involved.

Torn between its pro- and anti-nuclear wings, official Labour Party policy on Thorp is one of "waiting to be convinced" sceptical neutrality. But the effect of Labour's "considered approach", despite its implied criticism of reprocessing, has still been to blunt parliamentary opposition to Thorp, leaving the main criticism to come from the Liberal Democrat benches.

In the aftermath of the public consultation process, meanwhile, which ended in January 1993, the government found itself in an uncomfortable dilemma. On the one hand, the "authorising departments", HMIP and MAFF, had by now reported that as far as the new discharge applications were concerned, BNFL could have its approval. On the other hand, a large number of fundamental objections had been raised.

It had also become clear that the economics of Thorp looked thin. Not only was the profit margin predicted by BNFL in the first ten years nothing to write home about, but there was a growing checklist of uncertainties, not least the threatened German pull-out, that could quickly wipe it out. Treasury officials even held a meeting with Greenpeace representatives to hear their financial prognosis.

At the same time, Britain was beginning to look isolated over Thorp in both the European and international arenas, especially after the Paris Commission decision. The British Euro-MP Llew Smith also nearly succeeded in persuading the European Parliament in July 1993 to pass a series of resolutions severely criticising the international traffic in spent fuel. Finally, there was the threat of a legal challenge if the government failed to call a full public inquiry into the proposed Thorp discharges. Legal advisors told Greenpeace that such a challenge stood a strong chance of succeeding if no further response was made to the 64,000 registered objections.

In the end, it took until 28 June for the new Secretary of State for the Environment, John Gummer, to announce in the Commons that there would be a new, second round of public consultation about Thorp, this time looking at the whole question of its justification. The new consultation would end on 4 October.

The ensuing parliamentary debate, the first

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about Thorp since 1978, lasted less than three hours. With Chris Smith voicing criticism from Labour's front bench, but with the party as a whole abstaining, there was a resounding majority for a government amendment supporting "the commissioning of the plant at the earliest practicable date". Even after that, the government still announced, in launching the second consultation period on 4 August, that it had not ruled out the possibility of eventually calling a public inquiry.

This apparent contradiction—and the lengthy period it took for the government to respond to the original protests—reflects a much less uniform view on Thorp behind the scenes than the parliamentary bravado suggested. Although the Department of Trade, whose energy minister Tim Eggar defended BNFL in the June debate, is extremely keen on Thorp, especially because of the overseas trade involved, other departments are much more sceptical. The Treasury in particular, keeping a tighter and tighter rein on government expenditure, has been worried that it might end up with a liability. The Foreign Office, not directly involved with Thorp, is reported to be concerned about the international trade in plutonium, one of the by-products of reprocessing. In the middle, the Environment Department, now headed by an admitted nuclear enthusiast, is uncertain which way to jump. At one stage, the whole issue was submitted to a special cabinet committee to see whether some agreed path could be found through the conflicting views.

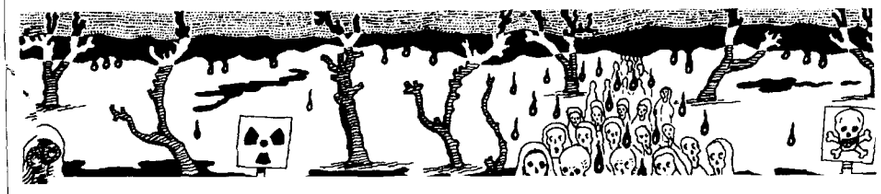
There is other evidence of shifts in the Whitehall position. Although government policy is officially in favour of Thorp, there has been an important change in its attitude towards reprocessing. A Scottish Office civil servant, speaking for the government, told the 1992-93 Torness inquiry into building a dry store for spent fuel (considered a safer alternative to Thorp) that: "The reprocessing route did not appear to offer any immediate and significant advantages from a waste management point of view." In Civil Service jargon, this was a way of saying that there has been a basic shift in policy.

More dramatically, there is a fascinating passage in the report produced in June 1993 for the US Senate on plutonium shipments to Japan. Having met various British officials during its investigation, the report notes that: "One British government official told us that the rationale for operating Thorp is no longer valid because Thorp cannot be a financially successful venture. He further contended that without economic justification to engage in commercial reprocessing, the basis for reprocessing in the United Kingdom collapsed."

The irony of all this is that while some Whitehall mandarins, and even some members of the government, would be happy to adopt a position not too dissimilar to that of Greenpeace, their public face doesn't allow them seriously to consider the possibility.

Excerpted from "Thorp: the Whitehall nightmare" by Crispin Aubrey. Published 28 October by Jon Carpenter Publishing, PO Box 129, Oxford OX1 4PH, price £5.99

GREEN GAUGE



Nuclear power's future is again being talked up. **Vicky Hutchings** asks when it will be the turn of renewables

Lately, Nuclear Electric has been getting extremely bullish about the future of nuclear power, even announcing that it is applying for permission to build a second PWR at Sizewell C ahead of the government's nuclear review. And some papers have swallowed this whole.

Only last week, the *Independent* insisted that "nuclear production costs have fallen from 5p per unit to about 3p". This is roughly similar to new gas-fired power stations, although the average for existing coal-fired plants is around 2.2p a unit. Unnamed ministers waxed lyrical about how "the proportion of electricity generated by nuclear power will increase from 20 per cent to 25 per cent".

The reason for this campaign is not hard to understand. In a few weeks, the government's nuclear review will be under way, and will come to its conclusions next spring. The inquiry's remit is expected to be firmly located in the economic arena: between the costs of nuclear electricity and the possible privatisation of the industry. Lurking at the back of everyone's mind is the year 1998, when the subsidy electricity consumers pay to prop up the nuclear industry comes to an end.

So what are the facts?

Last year, the DTI's energy paper 59, projecting ahead to the year 2020, envisaged nuclear power contributing a mere 1 per cent of our electricity supply. The 1 per cent will be produced entirely by the UK's first PWR, currently being built at Sizewell B with electricity consumers' money. So even if the Sizewell C and Hinkley C PWRs go ahead, the total percentage will still not make double figures. Not unless a massive nuclear building programme starts now.

But if nuclear stations are indeed producing electricity at 3p a unit, what are we paying the subsidy for? In fact the 3p is what Nuclear Electric fondly imagines Sizewell C will achieve in the future. Even Sizewell B, due to start work next year, will only produce electricity at 4.5p a unit, says Nuclear Electric spokesperson, Stephen Ogle.

So what explanation does Ogle give for Sizewell C's electricity being so cheap? One reason is the learning curve of those who worked on Sizewell B. The second is economies of scale, since Sizewell C will be a twin reactor with shared services. The third, "based on US experience", is an availability of 85 per cent, ie, the reactor is out of commission for only 15 per cent of its life.

Steve Thomas, of Sussex University's Science Policy Research Unit, is not particularly impressed with any of these arguments. In particular, claiming that US experience backs up the high availability claim is a mystery to him, since the American Westinghouse PWR average is 65 per cent, "if *that*". He notes a recent decision in Oregon to shut down a PWR after 15 years (it should make 40) because continuing technical glitches were making it too expensive to run. Some nuclear experts are suggesting that Nuclear Electric pulled the 3p figure out of the air, and then set about trying to back it up.

Rachel Western, a nuclear researcher at Friends of the Earth, can name any number of reasons why the private sector would want nothing to do with the nuclear industry: fear of accidents, changes in safety regulations, higher construction costs, bad performance, and major problems with waste disposal and decomissioning. The sums for Sizewell C have been done on an 8 per cent discount rate, the relatively high rate of return fixed on by this government for public-sector projects. But commercial rates for such a high-risk venture would be even higher.

A feasibility study last year for a tidal barrage on the Wyre estuary in Lancashire found that the scheme would generate 131GWh of electricity a year and add 16MW of capacity to the national grid. Based on an 8 per cent discount rate, electricity would be produced at 6.5p a unit. High, yes. But with between 5.7p and 11p a unit being paid to those harnessing landfill gas and wind (under the same subsidy scheme that supports the nuclear industry), what is there to complain of, except that the scheme should be enormously extended, as most of the subsidy goes to nuclear.

This is a matter of vision and will. The government's stated aim is to create a further 1,500MW (2 per cent) of new renewable electricity generation by the end of the century. The report produced earlier this year by the government's own advisory body, the Renewable Energy Advisory Group, said it believed that 45 per cent of our electricity supply could come from renewables by the year 2025. Waves, crops and wind played the largest part in the long term.

This will need much more than subsidising already-existing technology. If the EC can pay to build two wave-power devices in Scotland, announced last month, to advance scientific understanding, then the government should acknowledge its own responsibilities as well. The renewables group also gave, as its worst-case prediction, new renewables supplying a mere 5 per cent of our electricity. Is that the future we are heading for?

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Scots Guard gives water to a captured German in 1918: from Malcolm Brown's "Imperial War Museum Book of the First World War" (Sidgwick & Jackson)

Parting shots

The Great War of 1914-18 left surprisingly few photographs of carnage. In Serbia, amid the passions of another struggle, **Geoff Dyer** confronts the imagery of death

A noiseless blizzard is blowing outside my window. A few cars, figures trudging through the grey snow of Belgrade. Cocooned from the world, the only noise is the ambient hum of hotel luxury. Already half-drunk, I open a beer from the mini-bar, flick through the channels on TV. Basketball, CNN (blizzards over Croatia and Bosnia), skiing, films dubbed into German and Italian, a couple of scrambled channels, basketball again. You could waste eternity itself doing this and still never watch anything. I float in the bath for half an hour, drink another beer and resume channel-hopping. This time I linger over what turns out to be a porno movie.

At first I think it is a low-budget romance but an extended bout of kissing gradually gives way to a love scene that looms, suddenly, into pubic close-up. I am struck by how like real sex it is—then I realise it's not like real sex—it *is* real sex. Strangely, there is no bodily fluid around. This doesn't matter since all these bodies are inherently lubricated.

As the sex intensifies and escalates so the nominal plot dissolves—but never entirely disappears. In the closing scene, the couple from the first act say an emotional farewell to each other, exactly as in any soap opera: it's just that here she has to speak her lines while writhing on the brink of an orgasm induced by another woman who happens to be lying on the sofa between her legs. Perhaps this is why the leave-taking is so unconvincing: in the porno world people come rather than go.

It may not be pretty but there is something idyllic about this world where everyone has wonderful sex with everyone else, regardless of gender or any obligations they are meant to fulfil (even a helicopter pilot manages to have cramped mid-flight sex in his aptly named cockpit).

The film ends. Slightly stunned by it all, I scroll through the channels again. Basketball, snow over Bosnia and Croatia . . . It is still snowing here in Serbia, too. Beyond my wide-screen window, Belgrade hunkers down, waiting for the blizzard to pass.

Relative to the scale of the slaughter, very few pictures of the British dead survived the first world war. At the front, photographers' freedom of movement was severely restricted, and any photographs that did get taken were subject to strict censorship so that no images prejudicial to the war effort found their way into print. After the war, the archives were vetted so that the number of photographs of British dead was whittled down still further. Like all the most efficient restrictions these successive measures worked consensually rather than simply repressively. Reflecting, establishing and perpetuating a broad agreement between state, photographers and public as to what fell within the limits of acceptable taste, they defined that which they claimed to be defined by.

The pictures that have been preserved tend to show isolated or small groups of dead soldiers. They give no sense of death on the scale recorded by John Masefield, for example, who, four months after the Battle of the Somme had ended, wrote of how the dead still "lay three or four deep and the bluebottles made their faces black".

Typically, pictures from the front line show not the dead, but people who have witnessed death. A well-known photograph shows a soldier suffering from battle fatigue. What does this face express? It is difficult to say because any word of explanation has to be qualified by its opposite: there is the most intense appeal for compassion—and an utter indifference to our response; there is reproach without accusation; a longing for justice and an indifference to whether it comes about. The picture is mute. It is immune to our gaze.

Looking at a photograph of Napoleon's youngest brother, Barthes noted with wonder: "I am looking at eyes that looked at the Emperor." In this photograph, we are looking into the eyes of a man who has seen death.

During the Spanish civil war, Robert Capa took the most famous war photograph of all time which showed—or purported to—the precise moment of a Republican soldier's death in action. In his photographs of the second world war, we come across the dead almost casually, in houses and streets. A photograph from December 1944 shows a frozen winter scene with bare trees, cattle and huts in the background. A GI advances across the photo towards a body lying in the middle of the field. Some way off, beyond the margins of the frame, in the next photograph, there will be another body. Through Capa's photos, in other words, we follow a trail of

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bodies. This trail leads, ultimately, to the photos of mass death at the core of our century: naked bodies piled up in concentration camps. Capa, personally, had no intention of photographing the concentration camps because they "were swarming with photographers, and every new picture of horror served only to diminish the total effect".

Theodor Adorno said famously there could be no poetry after Auschwitz. Instead, he failed to add, there would be photography.

Since the concentration camps, we have seen hundreds, thousands of photographs of the dead: from Cambodia, Beirut, Vietnam, Salvador and Sarajevo.

Photographs of the dead are now ten a penny. In recent months, a war of escalating explicitness has been underway. A South African boy with his nose shot off, blood pumping through the hole in his face. Muslim women burned in their homes. No news bulletin worthy of its name comes without a warning that some of the images in it might upset some viewers. Introducing a report from Bosnia, Peter Sissons said viewers would find many of the images very disturbing. ITN will retaliate, presumably, with a report that all viewers will find unwatchably terrible.

Not only is ours a time when anyone—from presidents of the United States to nameless peasants—might die on film; this has been the time when, to a degree, people *only* die on film. Like many people, I have seen hundreds of bodies on film and never one in real life: an exact reversal of the typical experience of the Great War.

The drift of photography since then has been from looking into the eyes of men who have seen death to seeing things *through* their eyes.

Waiting for you to emerge from the shower, I glance through some books on the living-room shelves. One of them is an anatomy textbook. Photos show the body stripped of successive layers: clothes, skin, fat, muscle. There is not a drop of blood to be seen, hardly even a hint of red or pink. Cuts and injuries reveal a pulsing arterial richness; these photos show a world of uncured, brownish leather. The pictures become more explicit by the page. Every nook and cranny of the body is held up to impartial scrutiny. A foot, a shoulder, ligaments, a shrivelled brown cock. It is like pornography taken to some ultimate numbing stage of total disclosure.

By comparison, the film of a few nights ago seems gentle and elusive as a fairy tale. Everything is displayed, nothing is revealed. By the closing pages I am half expecting to see the soul itself displayed as a dark tumour-shaped lump or a resilient piece of gristle which, like the appendix, serves no real medical function and can be disposed of as superfluous.

It is depressing, looking at this book, to think that this is what we all are and will become: a mass of dry, spongy material, nine-tenths of which seems dedicated to waste disposal. This is my first reaction, a cliché almost. Then there is the uplifting sense that such an extraordinary variety of models can be constructed from the drab uniformity of these basic ingredients. And then, finally, when I close the book and replace it on the shelf, there is the depressing downturn—how often thought proceeds like this—because none of these revelations leads anywhere, adds up to or means anything: as though thought itself shares the same characterless, agnostic quality as the organs depicted.

You emerge from the shower, beautiful, hair wet, naked beneath a snow-drift towel.

"Does it snow still?"

Outside nothing is swirling or falling.

We head off to an art gallery in the centre of Belgrade where there is an exhibition of photographs. The ground floor of the gallery has huge windows and, from a distance, without my glasses, I see only the glamorous blurs of magazine colour.

The exhibition is entitled "Crimes against Serbs". The pictures are of bodies with their brains splattered out, their throats cut. Strangled with wire, beaten, set on fire, shot. Bodies that have been killed three or four times over. Sometimes the blood is bright red, staining the white snow. Other times everything is turning brown or ghastly grey.

The photos of the dead are juxtaposed with pictures of the victims when they were just old people or mothers or girlfriends. Snaps like the one of you I carry, faded, in my wallet.

The inevitable question: how could people do these things to one another? The answer comes back immediately: with the greatest of ease, without batting an eyelid.

In the basement, as background to the current conflict, photos show the earlier history of atrocities inflicted on the Serbs. These, as befits an issue of history, are in black and white. One, from the camp at Jasenovac, shows a man propped up on one elbow as if modelling clothes in a catalogue. His head lies on the floor, three feet away.

In the visitors book I transcribe Auden's lines from "September 1, 1939":

"I and the public know
What all schoolchildren learn,
Those to whom evil is done
Do evil in return."

We are about to leave when a man in his sixties looks up from the book and says, "English?"

"Yes," I answer.

"It is difficult for you to understand. It is different for us. They are our people."

"They're my people too."

"You are English."

"They're still people."

Outside snow is turning into slush. So is the sky. Blue blurs the melting grey.

Unlike news reports these photographs do not provoke tears or pity any more than the film I watched a few nights ago induced love. They are too stark for that. But I walk with my hand very gently round your shoulders. Not to harm anyone: simple enough, that hope seems an ambition vast enough to consume a lifetime.

Back at your apartment we make love and doze. We wake to find your period has started, smudging the white sheets.

We lie talking for hours, my hands in your hair. Your eyes. Your Serbian face. These are our last hours together and we try not to sleep again. Drifting on the edge of sleep, I think again of Auden's poem: "We must love one another or die." Auden eventually cut this line because, he reasoned, we're going to die anyway, love one another or not. But he could, it seems, have changed the "or" to an "and".

My name is Milan Pavlovic. I drive the minibus that takes people from Belgrade to Budapest. Since sanctions have closed the airport at Belgrade there is a great need for this: to get anywhere you must fly from Budapest.

The first bus leaves Belgrade at five in the morning and this is the shift I like best. Five is when I pick up the last passenger; the rest are already in the bus by then.

I arrange the schedule and route for picking up my passengers. They are scattered all over the city and sometimes I have to pick up the first one as early as quarter past four. If their place is very difficult to find, I arrange to meet them at the corner of a street that is well known.

People are always waiting. No one is late. On street corners or outside their houses. Girlfriends leave their boyfriends. Husbands leave wives. They say goodbye, embrace, kiss: those last moments when their eyes are like cameras, trying to store up this memory of the other to keep by them when they are away.

They all think they have had to get up early, but I have always been up before them. They are sad to leave their loved ones and never think that every morning I, too, leave my wife in bed. I wake before the alarm goes off and cuddle against her while she snores. Then into the cold. At this time of year the minibus is freezing but by the time I reach the first pick-up—today a boy leaving his girl—it is warm and nice for them.

Next a young man is leaving his family, returning to Israel. Everyone kisses and says goodbye. The mother is crying. Sometimes there are people on their own and I can almost feel their happiness from a distance when they see the lights of the minibus approaching. Once the bus is full, we are on our way, crossing the river and leaving the city before even the news stands or cafes are open, before the sun is out of bed!

The return journey is not the same. I drop people off at their homes but the reunions take place invisibly. I pick people up at an exact time, but because no one knows precisely when they will return, their families are waiting for them inside. Life, as I see it, is all about farewells rather than reunions. That is why we have songs and photographs. It is parting that makes up our lives.

Geoff Dyer's book about jazz, "But Beautiful", won a Somerset Maugham Prize; his new novel, "The Search", will be published by Hamish Hamilton later this month

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What could be less PC than a drag act? **Carole Woddis** begs to differ

A frock and a hard place

"I thought I was running things in my life. But it was the other way round. People were running me." There are moments in most people's lives when the penny suddenly drops. For me, it was in the late 1960s, on a traffic island somewhere in Texas, hearing why a young man had been forced to leave home because he refused to get his hair cut—a gesture of defiance against his dad, but also the war his country was waging in south east Asia.

I remember it now as my first encounter with the real price of political involvement. Listening to Bette Bourne—drag artist, actor, founder of the cult gay theatre group, Bloolips, and star of Neil Bartlett's gay spectaculars, *A Vision of Love Revealed in Sleep* and *Sarrasine*—Bette's own moment of awakening has the ring of truth about it.

"Politics," says Bette, "is about feeling. It's not something you can govern, you can't intellectually decide on these things." That may not be to everyone's taste, but fitting in has not exactly been at the top of Bette Bourne's agenda.

It does go some way to explaining the extraordinary power Bette's stage work exerts. Despite the female accessories—the long flowing hair, woman's fur coat, little high heels and lipstick—Bette remains a man in a frock. For him, still, that is a political act: a basic confrontation with society's idea of what it is to be a man.

The moment of revelation came in the early 1970s, while Bette was still part of the mainstream: a young, fairly successful classical—and carefully closeted—actor. But from that time on, his "straight" career irreversibly moved in other directions.

He got involved in gay liberation—"because of its sexy boys"—but within two weeks was on the steering committee, "totally involved up to my neck". Gradually, without making any conscious decision, he just "wobbled away" from theatre.

"I just found myself not going to certain auditions, dinner parties, or seeing certain people any more. I don't think you make conscious decisions, but who you are probably makes the decisions for you. I was brought up in Hackney, with this very butch, young-lad upbringing. But I was this mad queen, really. In gay lib, I naturally drifted towards the queens. That seemed to me a very exciting thing to do. It was very theatrical, dramatic, fun."

This week sees some of that spirit recreated in yet another leap of faith: his first solo show, suitably entitled *The Dish* and written by Paul Hallam. It's the story of a drag queen called China whose adventures closely parallel Bette's life as they jump the class, as well as gender, divide. To many, it's a long-awaited event—not just for raving queens but for anyone who recognises a performer with that indefinable extra ingredient: charisma. Expert at the slow burn, he has something of Dietrich's sly eroticism, only warmer, with just a hint of sleaze.

But it's the special alchemy between performer and audience that marks him out. Call it stillness, call it the accumulation of years. According to Simon Mellor, producer for Gloria and Neil Bartlett, it's the result of rare skill, complete dedication and early years spent working with the best. In his earlier incarnation, as a member of the Prospect Theatre Company, he worked alongside the cream of Britain's current classical heavyweights: Ian McKellen, David Calder and Timothy West. This, according to Mellor, is what gives his work its edge.

Not everyone sees it that way. "Old-fashioned", "sentimental", "an old queen parading his broken heart": some now simply regard Bourne's style as hopelessly out of fashion, an anachronism.

"God forbid he should actually make people in a darkened room cry," snorts Mellor somewhat acidly. "If he is an anachronism," notes Gay Sweatshops' Lois Weaver, "he's a charming one."

Weaver, one half of the US lesbian team, Split Britches, has worked with him frequently and unequivocally regards him as an unsung "revolutionary . . . a door-opener for others to step through, turning the mundane into things fabulous".

Weaver believes that his celebration of being a man and loving men also made him a pioneer. "He does far more than just put on a frock. It's not just about impersonating women."

Perhaps that is why women of all persuasions feel at home with him. Jane Edwardes, *Time Out*'s theatre editor, notes that: "He brings dignity to drag, a kind of naturalness. I have a positive dislike of certain kinds of drag queens, the high heels and talons, the hankering after Hollywood and all that rather tacky glamour. But Bette doesn't do that. He undercuts it."

Mellor believes that Bette's life decisions contribute to the quality of his work: "What he's going to do and why he's doing it. That shows on stage. Like Sheila Hancock, who has also worked with him, he's only going to do work that means something to him."

To Bette, that wearing of the frock still rocks the pedestal and, when he walks in the street, still attracts flak. "Any day of the week, walk with me and you'll see what I mean. The barrage of abuse, year in, year out. It's dangerous out there, and getting worse." When Lois Weaver says, "Bette's entire life is political," she speaks no more than the truth.

"The Dish" is running at The Drill Hall, Chenies Street, London WC1

Jonathan Romney is exposed to Mike Leigh's blast of hatred

Scumbag saviour

Mike Leigh's *Naked* is what you would call a black comedy, partly because everything in it really is black, or at least the deathly grey of urban sludge. It's this monochrome—meticulously art-directed in street scenes, interiors, clothes, even the characters' lard-pallid faces—that makes *Naked* the one Mike Leigh film that really looks like a film through and through. *Naked*, for once, is its own universe, not simply a filmed amplification of sitcom conventions.

It's also the furthest Leigh has come from anything approaching realism, although it's immersed to the hilt in a traumatised conception of the real—the real London of homelessness, violence, sexual exploitation and despair. That doesn't make it any less a cartoon. *Naked* (on general release from 5 November) has been acclaimed as the most searing state-of-the-nation message British cinema has produced since whenever. But it's hard to feel that the cruel world its characters inhabit is more than simply a shabby, bleak backdrop for one startling solipsistic character turn.

One man came to moan: David Thewlis

Naked is effectively a one-man show for the sarcastic, probably psychotic northern drifter Johnny (David Thewlis), who hits London for a joyless journey to the end of the night, or at least the tube line. Fleeing after a back-street rape, he drifts into the household of his ex-girlfriend, where he pauses for sexual taunts at Sophie, a feckless goth (Katrin Cartlidge).

Then he's off into the night, where he vicariously relishes the inarticulate misery of a young Glaswegian homeless couple, mystifies and is mystified by a cafe waitress, and is given brief succour by a middle-age security guard whose misogyny and apocalyptic inclinations match his own. Somewhere at

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the other end of the story is Leigh's most extreme stereotype yet: a demonic yuppie (Gregg Cruttwell) apparently summoned up out of some 1980s style-mag nightmare. Can Leigh possibly believe such a quintessence of polo-necked evil exists in the real world?

Surely not. Jeremy is just dropped in schematically as a counterbalance to Johnny. But Johnny caricatures himself with such self-eviscerating glee that it's often hard to care about anyone else. If *Naked* had set out to be a portrait of destructive solipsism and nothing but, the treatment couldn't have mirrored the theme better.

David Thewlis' performance is staggering: a gymnastic display of free associating, depressive mirth spat out in a bark halfway between John Lennon and rock's other great misanthrophic northern ranter, Mark E Smith of The Fall. And the performance annihilates everything else around him, bar Peter Wight, in a remarkable, passively sardonic turn as the guard.

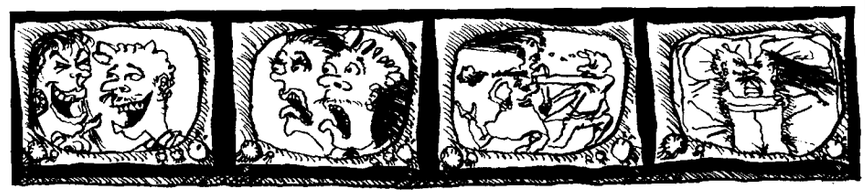
Johnny is a man of absolute conviction, but his opinions seem random, entirely generated by the drunken speed of his tongue. It's not philosophy, but a cocktail of puns and paranoia, loathing and (what might conceivably be) soured love. He spouts conspiracy and chaos in a breakneck tumble of rancid one-liners that could be either cosmic *aperçus* or just bad jokes: "Every time this butterfly flaps its wings in Tokyo, this old granny in Salford gets a bilious attack." Every line's a killer, either to maim others or to draw hell down on himself. He's cruising compulsively for the inevitable bruising.

What's disturbing, though, is how much the film loves Johnny's charisma. There's a very ambivalent moment when Johnny looks up and barks, "Why hast thou forsaken me—*bastard*", and we're not quite sure how to take this pathetic self-aggrandisement. Can we really see Johnny as a Christ-figure wandering the streets, a penitent drawing humanity's shame down upon himself. Or is he just a venomous git who needs a good kicking? Everything seems to suggest that, unlike the smarmily satanic Jeremy, Johnny is somehow redeemable because, unlike all those Leigh characters condemned to gabble in their restricted code, he has language on his side.

The film entertains a stormy love-hate relationship with this sneering demagogue. It certainly has no love for the losers around him—especially the witless, masochistic women who wait compliantly for Johnny to fuck them over. The characterisation counts in this—notably in Katrin Cartlidge as the clueless Sophie, virtually a re-run of Jane Horrocks' whining turn in *Life is Sweet*.

Naked is textbook fodder for the debate that invariably surrounds films that "stage" misogyny rather than simply describe it. But the film is so thoroughly focused on Johnny's self-love and loathing of everyone else that the rest of the world is obscured. Watching *Naked* is like being trapped for two hours in a railway carriage with a charismatic preacher who might possibly have an axe under his coat. It's utterly compelling, but you never get so much as a glance out of the window.

TELEVISION



Suburbia has its Buddhas and its rebels, and both work overtime at self-creation, argues **Chris Savage King**

Dads are often treasured by their suburban offspring. They are, after all, the ones who get out, on occasion. Roshan Seth as Karim's father in *The Buddha of Suburbia* (Wednesday, BBC2) is a glowing beacon of modest non-conformity. An Indian aristocrat, now a lowly civil servant, he preaches Buddhism and yoga to white, middle-class Bromley.

He falls in love with Eva (Susan Fleetwood), a plump, sweet Beckenham bohemian. Her pleasure in the arts, alternative lifestyles and her wealth is enjoyed for itself, not only as showing off. Karim, predictably, falls for Eva's son, Charlie (Stephen Mackintosh as an aspirant pop star, posturing for ambition), simply because he's different from anyone else in Karim's family.

Karim's mum is white, and made plain and ratty by a lifetime of timid drudgery. Auntie Jean, a brittle alcoholic, doesn't object to mixed marriage so long as she can call Karim's dad "Harry". Uncle Anwar, doggedly imitating Gandhi, goes on a hunger strike to blackmail his daughter into arranged marriage. Jamila (Jemma Redgrave) gets her head into Mao and feminism, and practises sex with Karim.

These characters have little sentiment, and not much compassion, but there's nothing presumptuous about them either. The conviction of the suburbs that it houses no one special means that everyone works overtime at self-creation. It's no mistake that Karim's first sighting of Charlie's short-lived spaceman phase is during a hallucinogenic flash. It's not real—surely? And yet it is. There's a touch of the charlatan in everyone, but no one's condemned for it.

Hanif Kureishi's novel—from which the serial is adapted by Kureishi himself and the director, Roger Michell—juggled with a tricky conundrum: the wish to be loyal to the suburbs in the face of a sneering metropolis, and a need to depict the frustration of a place you moved on from. In the series, Karim's restlessness is conveyed in a series of bike, car and train rides to family and friends.

Suburbia's public face is ordered and quiet. Practically everything of interest takes place behind doors. Karim, in the glossy, handsome form of Narveen Andrews, views Bromley as a phantasmagoria. The suburbs, as a cliché, are reinvented, and shown more as a seat of possibility, less a death sentence.

Like Kureishi, I was brought up in Bromley in the 1970s, and much of the joy of the series rests on home truths recognised. Teenage bedrooms were determinedly turned into bohemian grottos that became the venue for vaguely naughty activities: furtive and opportunistic sex, throwing up after your first joint, playing records, trying on clothes, staring into space, dreaming of the future. Necessity and desperation drove you to embrace rock and pop culture early, which thankfully did the trick of making you dissatisfied with your expectations.

The need to dress up, even to go nowhere in particular, was of paramount importance. There was little environment to make an impression on—you had to do it all for yourself. Arty and intellectual interests were not covered by the school syllabus. You had two choices: leave at 16 and do something, or stay on for A levels and get bored senseless. In *Buddha*, Jamila leaves and embarks on a ferocious programme of self-education. Karim stays on to suffer random racial aggression, but spends most of the time bunking off.

David Bowie—another Beckenham boy—has scored the serial and written the title track. An ideal version of a suburban type, he never stopped reinventing himself. Kureishi has remarked that he thinks Bowie's "Rebel Rebel" is about Bromley, and he's probably right. But suburban rebellion is wholly self-serving, with the pretty dimensions of a 45 rpm record.

Outwardly mobile suburbanites love themselves too much to subordinate themselves to something bigger: doctrinaire politics, terrorism, a Vegan diet, a serious smack habit, suicide attempts. Self-indulgence and sybaritism are things to aspire to, and Karim duly follows this path. Self-destruction or idealism are near incomprehensible.

Similarly, righteous anger usually comes a cropper. Suburbanites aren't convinced enough to sustain the effort. When Karim is subjected to jerky, racist verbals by a girlfriend's father, he tries to piss in the man's car. Instead, he's interrupted by the family's Great Dane, who enthusiatically humps him. Already, he's being primed to trade on his exoticism. Even the household pets want to fuck him, in Beckenham. "Where were you born?" asks his girlfriend Helen, breathlessly. "Bombay," he lies, without missing a beat.

Karim cultivates charm, lies strategically, gets good at buttering people up, gets laid. The book had all that charm, truth and honesty. The series has all these qualities by the bucketful.

Jaci Stephen is on holiday

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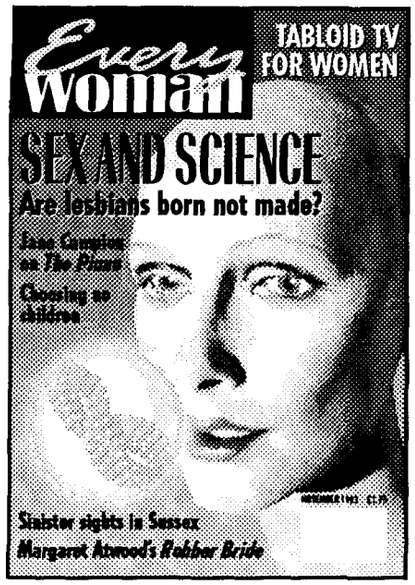

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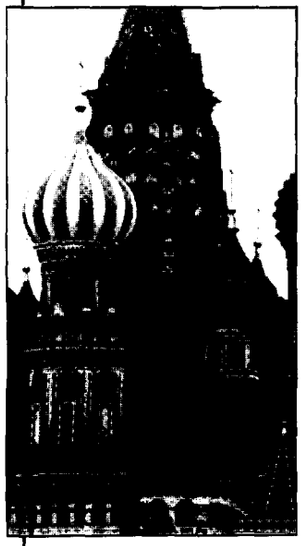

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SMALL ACTS: THOUGHTS ON THE POLITICS OF BLACK CULTURES
Paul Gilroy
Serpent's Tail, £12.99

Stephen Howe

Spike Lee and Jazzie B, Walter Benjamin and the Jubilee Singers, Sonia Boyce and Keith Piper, Richard Wright, Theodor Adorno, J M W Turner and W E B Dubois, Hegel, Hendrix and 2 Live Crew: very few writers could find things to say about every character on so dazzlingly eclectic a cast-list. Perhaps only Paul Gilroy could offer not merely striking insights about all of them, but present a compelling case for their belonging in the same narrative.

The narrative itself, as set out in *The Black Atlantic*, resists easy summary. It centres around the effort to demonstrate that the ideas and cultural forms of black communities on all the shores of the Atlantic have composed a single story, an elaborate pattern of call and response. This makes a nonsense of the national frameworks within which black history and culture are usually discussed.

And that pattern, in its turn, is far more influentially intertwined with the central themes of modernity in Europe and America than is ordinarily thought. This means that the dominant discourses about Europeanism, Englishness, Americanism, modernism and postmodernism—with their mirror image of fashionable "Afrocentric" theories—also need drastic revision.

If this sounds a somewhat intimidating agenda, its execution is far less so. In a field suffused with what Edward Said aptly called "jargons of an almost unimaginable rebarbativeness", Gilroy's lucidity is exemplary. And the seriousness of what he is attempting stands out in an academic world where practitioners believe they strike mighty blows for liberation by rereading Charlotte Brontë in ever more implausible ways, "exposing" the hidden racism and colonialism in every allusion to anything dark or foreign.

Gilroy is possibly trying to do too much at once in *The Black Atlantic*. He brings together arguments about diaspora and transnational politics and aesthetics, about slavery, modernism and postmodernism, about the importance of European influences for Afro-American thinkers and vice versa, and much more. This book opens a field that simply cannot be explored properly in 200-odd pages. But the sense of overcompression this induces is just an index of how important *The Black Atlantic* is. Indeed, to find real parallels for Gilroy's range of interests, one would have to go to the Grand Old Men of politico-cultural enquiry: a Raymond Williams or a C L R James.

Small Acts is a slighter work. It's a collection of articles, talks and dialogues whose original appearances spanned several years, while *The Black Atlantic* is a single, connected argument. There is some overlap, mostly of ideas featured in embryonic form in *Small Acts* and considerably matured in the other book. Yet they still cry out to be read together, because various pieces in *Small Acts* amplify the central motifs of *The Black Atlantic* or extend them into fields like cinema, painting and photography.

Possibly Gilroy's most striking insights come from analyses of black musicians. He's an accomplished player and avid record collector as well as a critic. Some of his previous writing had seemed to fall into the trap of treating music as if it were in some straightforward way representational, and as if black music always carried a transhistorical message of resistance and racial affirmation.

These claims have been subjected to harsh but powerful critiques by Alric Cambridge in his *Where You Belong*. Without replying directly, Gilroy amends his stance here to develop an argument that asserts a *non*-representational but strong relationship between diaspora musical aesthetics and political action.

Gilroy's historical engagement with a transoceanic, rather than a national or continental, perspective shadows his growing involvement with politico-cultural debates in the US. He laments the pervasive cynicism which, with Spike Lee and various unsavoury "gangsta rap" crews as its standard-bearers, is very much in the ascendant in black American culture. It sells Pepsi and Levis as readily as it does a sanctified image of Malcolm X, and vicious misogyny alongside ahistorical nonsense about the Pharaohs.

And he's correct to argue that US debate has been persistently parochial. The recent "culture wars" have, to a quite astonishing degree, focused exclusively on rival versions of Americanism; even, or perhaps especially, when some protagonists have been proclaiming their Africanism. It's the "We Are the World" syndrome with a vengeance.

"It's a Black Thing: you wouldn't understand" says a T-shirt slogan one still occasionally sees on both sides of the Atlantic. This is not a view Gilroy has much time for. There is, he insists, a wide spectrum of cultural and intellectual expression that is specifically black. But it's not so by virtue of roots and inherited codes, still less of some mystic racial essence. The "ethnic absolutism" and "cultural insiderism" that sanction such claims are a constant target of his critique.

For all this, I still have one big problem with Paul Gilroy's work. It carries a powerful political charge—but one is left oddly unenlightened about what *kind* of political conclusions or action it might imply. Compared to most of what passes for cultural politics and criticism in Britain and the US today, Gilroy is a giant among querulous and self-regarding dwarfs. But even he reveals the limitations of a politics based on ideas about culture. In the politics of "race", as in any other sphere, one sometimes has to talk about economics, about policies, about state power.

One of *The Black Atlantic*'s acknowledgements is to: "Anthony Jackson, the greatest bass player on the planet whose quirky, elemental genius is something I strive to emulate." Only a very brave person would

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challenge Gilroy's judgment on bassists, as on any of his other fields of knowledge.

But I can't help feeling that adopting Jackson as a model somehow undersells the ambition and originality of what Gilroy is doing. Jackson is mainly a sideman, a session musician, inimitably embellishing other people's creations rather than forging his own. Maybe Fred Hopkins, Charlie Haden or even the immortal Charles Mingus would be better parallels. *The Black Atlantic* is that good.

Stephen Howe's "Anticolonialism in British politics" is published this month by the Clarendon Press

Agenda of surrender

CHAMBERLAIN AND APPEASEMENT: BRITISH POLICY AND THE COMING OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR
R A C Parker
Macmillan, £11.95 paperback/£35 hardback

Kenneth O Morgan

"Appeasement", like "Empire", has a genealogy all its own. At the time of Suez and in debates on Bosnia now, it implies craven surrender at almost any price. Eden in 1956, Thatcher today, can make free reference to Hitler. But for most of the 1930s, appeasement seemed almost noble. A proper revulsion at the horrors of world war was combined with a bold, positive policy of phased concessions to supposedly reasonable German demands, along with an Anglo-German understanding to secure the independence of Britain and her Empire.

Only after Munich did appeasement become the dirtiest of words. In June 1939, Chamberlain dropped it from his speeches as "it was open to considerable misconstruction". Only then did his vainglorious grand design and his credibility plunge into ruin.

European appeasement was the conventional wisdom in the mid-1930s—for Eden, Lloyd George and the Labour Party no less than for Baldwin and Hoare (of the Laval pact fame). But with the advent of Chamberlain as premier in 1937, passive, apprehensive appeasement of Germany (and also Japan) turned into active, optimistic appeasement by a dominating, confident prime minister.

This was not the timid, over-promoted mayor of Birmingham waving his umbrella at Hitler and Mussolini, but an arrogant, opinionated man whose miscalculations proved catastrophic. The way in which Chamberlain turned foreign policy to his own purposes is the theme of R A C Parker's superb book. Based on a matchless knowledge of the archives and written with a kind of controlled intensity interspersed with elegant wit, it makes all previous accounts redundant and is of the first importance.

In his logical way, Parker demolishes myth after myth. The attempt by Tory apologists to portray Chamberlain as pursuing the only rational policy in the light of British military weakness, French ambiguities and a pacific domestic opinion, even more the absurd claim that Munich was a triumph that allowed a far-seeing premier to buy precious time, are totally destroyed. Chamberlain pursued a remorseless policy of concession, whatever the facts. He laid down a two-year agenda of surrender when he entered No 10—Austria, the "pig-headed" Czechs, Poland, with a few bits and pieces like Danzig and Memel.

He swept aside Eden's doubts over fascist Italy, Halifax's wavering after Bad Godesberg. Consistently, he accepted Hitler's "assurances". Territorial retreats such as the Sudetenland became, in Neville Henderson's words, "steps to restore confidence". Chamberlain beat down attempts by Daladier's French government to resist. He used the appalling Runciman to sweep aside Czech protests at the surrender of some territory, and the occupation of the rest.

He encouraged the isolationist Americans to keep their distance. He saw Munich not as a breathing-space but a diplomatic breakthrough that would mean universal peace. He used every endeavour to frustrate an alliance with Russia to guarantee Poland's frontiers. He did his best to slow down rearmament even after Munich. He made little effort to place the British economy on a war footing. He ignored the unions and resisted the demand for a Ministry of Supply. Even when overruled by his own Cabinet on 2 September 1939, he clung to the fantasy that Hitler was a rational statesman with whom an honourable settlement could be made.

As Parker argues, Tory apologists claiming there was no alternative are quite mistaken. By late 1938, Labour had shed its neo-pacifism under the influence of men such as Hugh Dalton; Lloyd George had dropped the hero-worship of Berchtesgaden days; Churchill's philippics on behalf of rearmament and international action to stop Hitler commanded nationwide support. In the end, public opinion, not Chamberlain, forced through the guarantee to Poland and made him go to war to honour his word. An effective Anglo-French alliance was always a realistic option that Chamberlain persistently undermined. And the war came.

Bosnia today is a shaky analogy. It is a complex civil war; the shifting sands of the EC are no basis for a clear international response; the US is bogged down in Somalia and Haiti. Even so, the Halifax-like Hurd, curiously over-praised in the media, provides some dismal echoes. The difference is that Britain then was still a great power whose failure to act was momentous. Today, a do-nothing government is expected to be feeble, and elaborately proves the point. Students of past disasters and present follies should read Parker's outstanding book.

Kenneth O Morgan is vice-chancellor of the University of Wales

Riot acts

MAKING THE PEACE: PUBLIC ORDER AND PUBLIC SECURITY IN MODERN BRITAIN
Charles Townshend
Oxford University Press, £17.95

Bernard Crick

The two legends that head this fascinating and important book say it all. First, "The best condition of a commonwealth is easily discovered from the purpose of political order: which is simply peace and security of life. Accordingly the best commonwealth is one in which men live in harmony, and the laws are kept unbroken. Rebellions, wars, and contemptuous disregard for the law must certainly be attributed to the corrupt condition of the commonwealth rather than to the wickedness of its subjects. For citizens are not born, but made." (Spinoza)

The second legend is from a more practical philosopher, Aneurin Bevan: "Political toleration is a by-product of the complacency of the ruling class. When that complacency is disturbed there never was a more bloody-minded set of thugs than the British ruling class." So, in theory, the matter is quite simple. Government primarily exists to maintain social order; widespread disorder signals bad government, and bad governments overreact.

Bevan's remark still implies something known by old Tories but not by the new: that if you keep your nerve, offer concessions and diversions and don't respond to provocations, normally nothing much goes wrong. It is all a matter of political judgment, not of law. Even before Townshend's masterly account, I have long been amazed at how bad the political judgments now are of the class that used to pride itself upon them (*vide* Burke and *prudence* rather than Thatcher and *ideology*). But, of course, there are few gentlemen left.

This historical account of the law-and-order debate—the concepts used, the major incidents, threats and panics—reveals a mid-19th century governing myth of a turbulent past replaced by a new era of social harmony. Once pasts looked worse; now they are supposed to look better (*vide* the national history curriculum). Both views are manipulative myths. I suspect that Townshend is of a naturally conservative disposition and won't let the left ignore the need for order, but several times he invokes Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony.

There was always disagreement and confusion about how much disorder could be tolerated. Magistrates disliked popular assemblies, which often were riotous, but governments were once more robust and only felt threatened in time of war (Pitt had read neither Hobsbawm nor Thompson).

Special powers were not thought necessary. Order rested on the good sense of the people: "the cooperative interaction of self-disciplined individuals". There was always another view, that the people was a great beast

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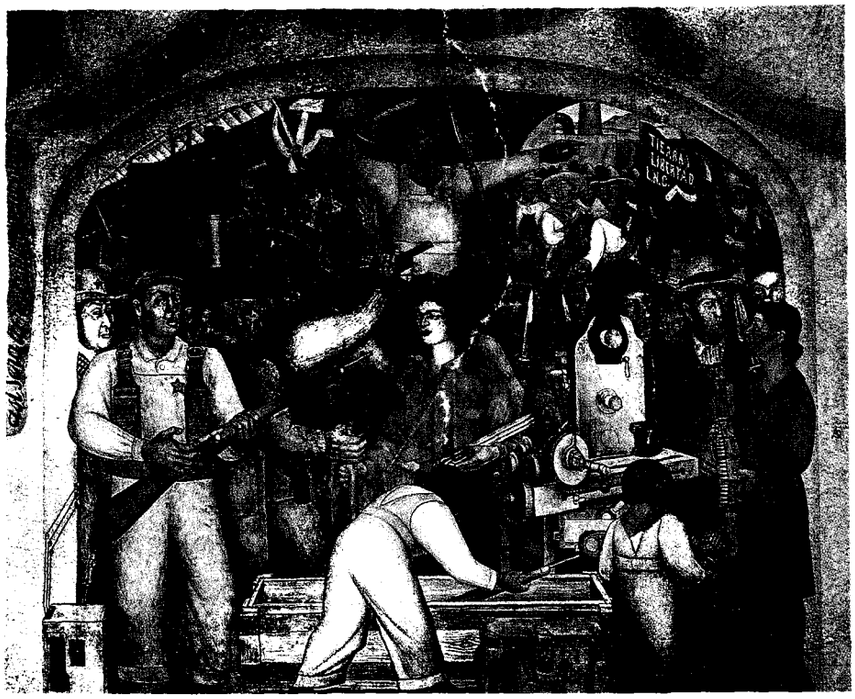

Celebrating subversion: Diego Rivera's "Distribution of the Arms" (1928), in Desmond Rochfort's lavish and scholarly study of the revolutionary art of the "Mexican Muralists" (Laurence King, £30)

that needed to be managed. But the more general view was itself part of that management. Only in India and Ireland, where there was no consensus to be governed, were special powers needed. In India, they took the extraordinary form of the codification of English law to be imposed by courts and military power. The fear was ever that such methods might be applied at home.

Here, only in the two world wars were those powers taken on a comparable scale, with astonishingly little debate by parliament or restraint by the courts. So great was the myth of consensus. Townshend explores what happens when even the belief in such consensus, let alone the reality, decays to leave huge discretion in the hands of police.

Townshend concludes that codification is now needed. He shows that Lord Scarman's celebrated report on the Brixton riots in fact evaded, in the traditional British way, any question of definition, leaving the law as it was. But a few years later, Scarman came out for comprehensive constitutional reform. Definitions of public order and the control of its agents must be at the heart of any constitution. Otherwise, public order is confused either with state security (necessary if rare) or even with mere government policy.

Douglas Hurd, when home secretary, blandly intoned that "subversive activities" were "generally regarded as those which threaten the safety or well-being of the state". As examiners say, "explain and discuss".

The new edition of Bernard Crick's "In Defence of Politics" is now in Penguin

The tinpot generalissima

THE DOWNING STREET YEARS
Margaret Thatcher
HarperCollins, £25

Sarah Benton

"It's just like Raymond Briggs' picture of her in *The Tinpot General*," said some children gazing at the photograph of Mrs Thatcher in Saudi Arabia. For this trip into *Men Only* land, she was wearing specially commissioned clothes including, it seems, corsetry designed by a naval architect that caused her breasts to rise, like twin torpedoes, from just below her armpits.

Although this photo appeared before Briggs' cartoon book, it would not have been surprising if she had modelled herself on his image of a grotesque warrior queen. As every reviewer of these memoirs has pointed out, she seems uniquely devoid of self-knowledge. Into this void go the images others have made; most enduringly, the Soviet description of her as the Iron Lady. She created her persona out of her enemies' vitriol; she owes them a debt she cannot repay.

Her remodelling of the Iron Lady character began before she won her first election. At that time, she was still keeping open the option of being The Scientist or Mrs Sensible Housewife, who knows a prime minister treats the national economy as a woman treats her household's.

Only a woman for whom money just mysteriously appears from father, husband, now son, could have come up with such an idea. For any actual housewife, the analogy was,

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as Sir Ian Gilmour has said, obvious "idiocy".

The curious thing about these inventions of herself or rather, of her persona, is that they have been so transparent from the start. Open-mouthed disbelief met her post-election use of the Francis of Assisi prayer (she did discard that pretty damn quick, but more because she preferred to be a Warrior Queen). Her auto-incarnation as the spirit of Britain caused the first widespread mutterings on her own side that she might be mad. It seemed so obvious a fantasy to set against the *realpolitik* of European negotiations.

And so it went on, until the point after her last election when she had moved beyond the invention of a public self into becoming a parody of her invention. The bizarre creature who had been coquetting around the airwaves, acting out the Iron Lady, had as many visible rivets and bolts as Raymond Briggs' cartoon. But the fact that this is a parody of a fantasy only suggests that we are all involved; her enemies as much as her friends created her and, pinioned in desire or loathing, urged her on to excess.

These memoirs cover her years as prime minister. What self she will devise as a vehicle for describing her origins and development we do not yet know. As every reviewer has noted, they are remarkable for the contempt she displays to everyone still living and for their tedium. An authentic self she has cultivated less sedulously is that of the erstwhile tax lawyer with an immense appetite for detail.

Indeed, she came to prominence partly as a rare woman MP—which endowed her with the gift of instant uniqueness as party leader—and partly for her ability to master a brief: a mixture of intellectual power and tolerance of what would drive others round the twist with boredom. However, given that she attributes the failings of some colleagues, especially Sir Geoffrey the Unforgiven, to their legal minds, her lawyer self has been buried.

Every now and then she brings out the "scientist" self for a brief twirl, but she has nowhere to take it, so it lingers in limbo. Although she spent very little time working as a scientist (she would be an early professional politician, were it not for her unearned income from Denis), there is some truth to this self-description. For even after 40 years in politics, she appears to have the naive beliefs about political history and ideas of someone who has never stepped outside a laboratory or had to engage with those outside her resolutely walled world.

The walls are mirrors because she refuses to acknowledge the validity of thoughts that clash with hers. She attributes all conflicts to personality failings—of other people. The most common failing she marks in the men around her is "vanity". There is no luxuriant riot of sin—merely vanity, sloppiness or greed. That's in her allies. Her enemies have sins of the evil-empire sort.

This book gives the most extensive role to sinister revolutionaries since a 1950s thriller. And then there are the traitors, a legion of them by 1990, but in fact prominent from the start in the form of leaks. Leaks are the ever-present, ever-hidden manifestation of permanent treachery. She never knows which deferential face conceals a leaker.

The penalty of this self-made creation is that she has no true friends. Yet one of her selves—the plain girl from Grantham who assailed the professions and Tory snobs—has bequeathed to us freedoms that no Labour government could have delivered. It is not this, however, that she vaunts in the megalomaniac account of the Iron Lady who single-handedly saved the world.

She asserts that the regeneration of Britain depended on the unique quality of her resolution, that in turn the western alliance depended on this regeneration, which in turn saved the entire world from annihilation by the evil empire. She thus dissolves the entire world into a manifestation of her will. It would be more alarming were it not so transparent.

How much of all this does she believe? It's impossible to say. An obvious paradox for a woman who has constructed her entire political mission on the idea of her own authenticity—she only speaks what is in her very being, her guts, her own origins as a true-born Englishwoman—is that her public being is an artifice. Her own narrative, if so disjointed a tale can be said to be one, fails to conceal the contradictions. Perhaps the most obvious is her position on convergence, and unity.

These qualities, when aspired to by other EC leaders, are *inherently* wrong, testament to their bureaucratic irresolution. But when applied to Nato, or any other military alliance, the standardisation of equipment and aims is a virtue to be pursued at all costs. She lauds her own decisiveness but on the many occasions when she does not know what to do, such as with British Leyland, she speaks petulantly of a refusal to be "bounced" into hasty decisions.

In fact, from this account of her premiership, it seems that she only ever knows what to do when an enemy has emerged for her to attack and destroy. The sheer belligerence of her relation to the world outside herself has long been apparent.

But her memoirs reveal a peculiar preoccupation with police officers and soldiers. Her first act on becoming PM she writes, was to increase their pay. She is gushing in her praise of their professionalism and rushed to offer them the best equipment.

This, clearly, is the role of the politician (in contrast with her relation to other public sector workers). Most alarmingly, and most akin to classic fascist thinking, is her dismissal of politicians during the Falklands' war. Mentioning Sir David Steel's restrained description of her as jingoistic, she says loftily: "How remote politicians seem at these times of crisis . . . "

This is a woman who has surrounded herself with male politicians, whom she feminises with the faults of vanity and irresolution. The only *real* men are fighting men. They are by definition anti-political, wholly admirable and absolutely no threat to her.

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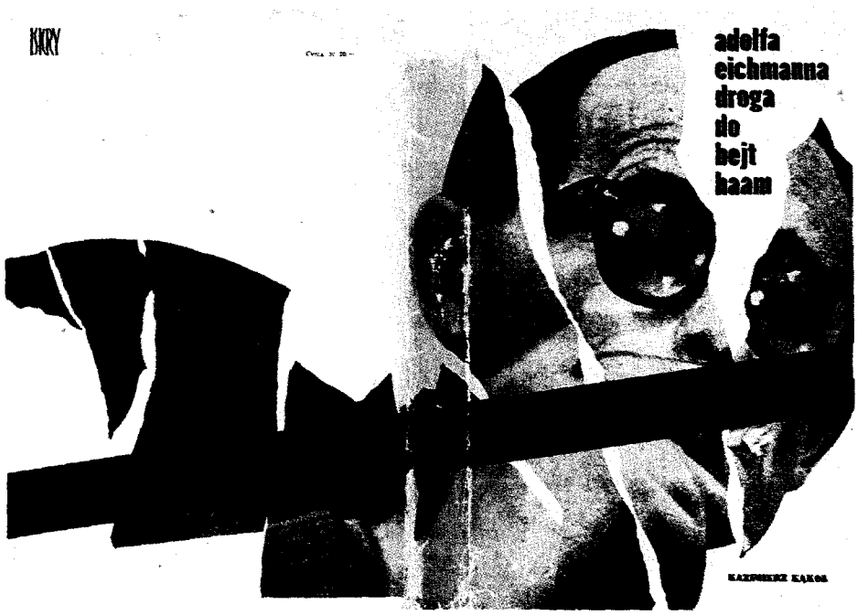

"Adolf Eichmann's road to Beit Haam": from Margo Rouard-Snowman's anthology of the Polish graphic artist Roman Cieslewicz (Thames & Hudson, £24.95)

The evil of banality

HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE: THE SHAPES OF MEMORY
Geoffrey H Hartman (editor)
Basil Blackwell, £14.99 paperback/£45 hardback

Carole Angier

The title of this book sums up the problem at the heart of it. It is about the difficulties of memory, not the "shapes" of memory, which is (I suppose) a poetic word for "forms". It is about the impossibility (and necessity) of remembering a wholly inhuman event, which was impossible to imagine before and to believe at the time. But it cannot really face the event or its own question; so it takes refuge in poetry. The trouble is that it is not a book of poetry, but (mostly) a book of academic analysis; and academics are very bad poets.

It consists of 21 essays, including an introductory one by its editor. The first two after that ask how Jews should remember, and rehearse clearly enough the dominating answers now in America: the need for Jews to reappropriate the Holocaust and to understand it in terms of ancient Jewish archetypes such as *Hurban* (the Destruction of the Temples). Other essays ask how Germans, Christians, Israelis remember or should remember it, how survivors and their children remember it, how artists and historians remember it, how builders of memorials try to help us remember it.

All these questions are interesting and important, and their answers disturbing. For at least ten years even Israelis didn't remember, Haim Gouri and Aharon Appelfeld tell us; Germans and Christians still don't remember properly, say Michael Geyer, Miriam Hansen and David Tracy. The last three agree with the great survivor and writer Jean Améry: the Holocaust requires that Germans (Geyer and Hansen) and Christians (Tracy) radically question their whole history, and publicly and actively repent.

This requirement is justifiable, even just. But it is not—as Améry knew—realistic. Memory is not, for anyone, an instrument for preserving the objective past, but for creating a liveable present (and this key problem of memory should have had more discussion in a book about the problems of memory). Germans should be aware that this is what they are doing; but we cannot expect them entirely to stop. If they did, and if they repented to the depth they ought, they would go mad and die. Perhaps this would be the only adequate restitution. But people simply do not commit mass suicide; it is no use expecting them to. And we must wonder what we have become if we require it of them.

Jewish survivors, of course, do often commit suicide: for instance, Améry himself, Paul Celan, Primo Levi. It is intolerable that the perpetrators should be able to adjust their memories more easily than the victims; that the victims should have to carry the burden of tainted memory on top of those of persecution and genocide. But that is how it is; and for other perpetrators and victims too. It is more useful to try to understand such painful truths (as Primo Levi does, for example, in his last book) than to issue rousing but pointless calls to change them.

But there is something worse here than pointlessness: there is bad writing. You may say that to think of form, with this content, is offensive. On the contrary. To put this content into any form that is less than pure—as clean of posturing as possible—that is more offensive. Too many of these essays are, in this way, offensive.

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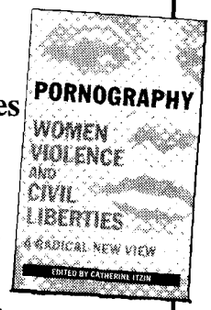

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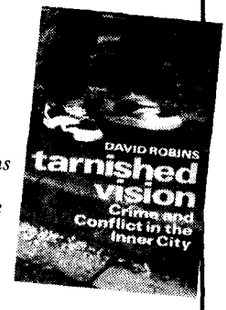

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They are all by academics. Some are leading Holocaust scholars, like Lawrence Langer; others I hadn't met before. They play with literary critical terms ("closure", "emplotment"). They crank up molehills into mountains and stick Barthesian italics on top like flags. And they indulge in "fine writing": the bad poetry with which I began.

Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi, for example, does all three together, writing of the poet Dan Pagis (who moved at the end of his life from obscure poetry to clear prose): "Having yielded his life unto the fictive, having died *into fiction*, he can now die 'for real' or *into* reality". Should this have been *into reality*? Would it make any difference?

Not all the academics are like this. (Alvin Rosenfeld is good on Améry, and James Young unobjectionable on Jewish memorials in Poland; Deborah Dwork and Robert Jan van Pelt are clear, informative—and shocking—on the differences between the Auschwitz we visit and the real camp of 1942-45: If you mean to go, read this first.) But most of them are. And here even other academics will find the book annoying, I predict, since the publishers have simply reprinted the American edition complete with American spelling and bibliographies.

The only essays really worth reading are the ones by good, even great artists: by the painter R B Kitaj and the writer Aharon Appelfeld. Forget the rest. Don't (especially) read Shoshana Felman on Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*; just go and see it. Just read Pagis, Appelfeld, Améry. Adorno was wrong: the only thing that *isn't* barbaric after Auschwitz is (real) poetry.

Carole Angier is writing a biography of Primo Levi

House calls

HONEST OPPORTUNISM: THE RISE OF THE CAREER POLITICIAN
Peter Riddell
Hamish Hamilton, £15.99

Angela Eagle

Are you hungry for power? Lacking in self-esteem? Experiencing difficulties in making meaningful relationships? Well, according to Peter Riddell's book you could be ideally suited to becoming a full-time politician. These are apparently the recurring characteristics psychologists use to explain why anyone in their right mind would wish to become an MP.

Fortunately for my blood pressure, Riddell is quick to dismiss such musings as psycho-babble in his search for what makes the full-time politician tick. His examination of case histories reveals that political interest and activity tend to begin in the teens or even earlier, as in my case. Thus, most of us who end up in the House of Commons began our training early.

But is this revelation really as significant as Riddell seems to think? After all, others who achieve success and recognition often follow a similar pattern. Steffi Graf picked up a tennis racket at an early age, almost as early as Richard Branson sold his first record and Fred Astaire tap danced in front of his first appreciative audience. Why should politicians be any different? I take issue with his assumption that such early starts are somehow a bad thing. The world is an increasingly complicated place. The amateur generalist has long gone and that is no bad thing.

Another unstated assumption pervading the book is that career politicians—that is, those who do the job full-time and rely on it for their main source of income—are also undesirable. Again I disagree. It is good for democracy that the age of part-time government by the landed aristocracy and those of independent means has also disappeared. They were a largely self-appointed clique from a very narrow social background who represented nothing so much as their own interests.

Once the chance to represent an electorate was enhanced by the payment of a proper wage, their dominance ended, and quite rightly. However, the chance to serve in parliament must still be extended further, particularly among women.

Riddell accurately sees politics as not so much a job, more a vocation. He compares it interestingly to the religious life. This insight does indeed capture a large part of the spirit that motivates someone to give up large parts of their time to politics. Though it is an unfashionable thing to say, politicians are prompted by a commitment to public service and altruism rather than self-glorification. There are, of course, exceptions to every rule.

Riddell points out the peculiarity of the British system, which requires membership of parliament prior to admittance to the government. While he deplores this, I believe it to be essential to the legitimacy of our system, where powers are not separated and accountability is to parliament alone. Could Ronald Reagan have lasted eight years on the floor of the Commons? I doubt it.

The author's suggestion that cabinet ministers be appointed and allowed into the Commons without the intervention of an electorate struck me as a constitutional monstrosity. I would favour the replacement of the Lords with an elected second chamber, so that no one could be brought into government without first being elected. In the age of Tory quangocracy, anything less is unacceptable.

The long discussion of the lack of proper representation for "industry" in parliament also left me cold. I believe multinational capital controls enough already.

At its worst, Riddell's book descends into tedium, with long lists of politicians who conform to his observations. At its best, it offers an interesting insight into a very particular craft practised after a long apprenticeship by relatively few. The chapter entitled "Failure" is a must for all of us.

Angela Eagle is MP for Wallasey

Giant killer

CITIZENS AND SUBJECTS: AN ESSAY ON BRITISH POLITICS
Tony Wright
Routledge, £9.99

Stuart Weir

Democracy, asserts Tony Wright, now belongs to the dignified part of British politics; and it is an argument he drives home with extra vigour, now that he has joined the undignified parliamentary club that provides false legitimacy for unchecked executive and party sovereignty.

But Wright, who once wrote the short and eloquent *Socialisms*, is concerned as much with the deficient culture of democracy in Britain as its outdated political institutions. For him, democracy is an argument about power and a claim to citizenship, and he argues persuasively for the urgent need to give "a contemporary meaning to the democratic idea"—a meaning that can be articulated in a public philosophy and put to work in political practice.

Wright, one of the bright 1992 intake of Labour MPs slightingly described as the Cerebral Tendency, is more republican than moderniser. But his short essay reveals a republican position that belongs squarely within the Labour ethos. He rejects as both pre-democratic and undemocratic the dominant political tradition of "strong" government that postwar Labour swallowed as it put the state's huge powers at the disposal of its collective politics. But he does not reject the idea of "strong" government. Wright argues for government "capable of achieving great things and slaying great giants" (note the echo of the ideals of Beveridge and Attlee), but he believes that such a government requires "a democratic response as diverse and extensive as government itself".

This view takes Wright beyond the conventional agenda of constitutional reform, for this response would go wider and deeper than mending and modernising existing democratic structures. Here, he draws not only on Labour's more pluralist past, but upon modern democratic theorists, like the American Robert Dahl, who argues that the democratic idea "is too grand to be trivialised by restricting itself to only one form of authority". Democratise, then, not simply Westminster, but the police, health authorities, the workplace, big corporations, financial institutions, and much else besides (may I add the media, Wimbledon, the Football Association and the Parliamentary Labour Party?).

All this leaves Wright in what the Chinese might describe as an "interesting" position. For one of the major obstacles to his vision of combining public purpose with pluralism, and democratising polity and society, is the party he belongs to. He notes, tactfully, that "conservatives of both right and left" prefer their known world of "monopolitic parties and no-nonsense sovereignty", but naturally

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enough fails to detail the ascendancy of the Conservative Tendency in the hierarchies of his party and associated trade unions. The inhabitants of this political Jurassic Park are already hostile or indifferent to the need for political reforms, let alone dangerous new proposals for advancing democratic and pluralist reforms elsewhere. Most damaging for people like Wright, they remain deaf, blind and dumb in the realm of ideas, where all new political worlds take shape.

Lenin's gravedigger

THE FATE OF MARXISM IN RUSSIA
Alexander Yakovlev, translated by C A Fitzpatrick
Yale University Press, £19.95

Robert Service

Russia is in a mess. Leaders, ideas and interests conflict. The events of the past weeks have posed again the questions of its destiny: of democracy, economic development, ethnic cohabitation and territorial definition.

The fact that Boris Yeltsin is perceived as crucial, for good or ill, to the solving of these questions indicates how intractable they are. The Russian president has a massive impact on the political scene in Moscow. His health and alleged fondness for liquor come into the analysis. His aide Lev Sukhanov has just published a booklet stuffed with medical information. The only motive can be a desire to deny that Yeltsin is about to die of illness or self-abuse. Moscow kiosks sell posters of the president in white shorts carrying a tennis racket and sporting a bandana, McEnroe style. Yeltsin appears as the sole Titan available to shoulder the weight of Russian politics and heave them out of immobility.

But we need also to know about his intentions. Is he a democrat who disperses a parliament only reluctantly? Or an autocrat uncomfortable with power-sharing? Is he neither of these, but a populist willing to throw any inconvenient policy overboard in order to retain power? The chances are that the answer is yes to all these questions, and that only unforeseeable developments will tell us who the real Boris Yeltsin is.

This is uncannily reminiscent of the years after 1985, when Mikhail Gorbachev dominated the stage. The fate of the country seemed to depend on one man's decisions and aspirations. His attitude to vodka caused no worry. There were no rumours about his health until the abortive August 1991 coup, whose leaders fabricated them.

Yet public opinon was exercised over his capacity to tame the party-military-industrial complex. Could he truly take on the Soviet establishment? Equally open to enquiry was the nature of his ideas. While calling himself

A scene from the 1991 Moscow coup, in David Remnick's "Lenin's Tomb: the last days of the Soviet empire" (Viking, £18.99)

a Marxist-Leninist, his actions undermined one-party rule, ideolatry and legal nihilism. His memoir of the August coup shows him faithful to Lenin, although he abandoned so many of Lenin's precepts.

This would mean that Gorbachev knew not what he was doing as he did it. He genuinely thought that, by renovating Leninism and modifying the USSR's political architecture, Communist Party rule would be ensured for further decades. A man of gigantic historical greatness had the outlook of the ideological playpen.

It may be that Gorbachev's recollections are not to be trusted. As Britain drowns in self-serving autobiographies of Conservative ex-ministers, so the former members of the Soviet Politburo have deluged Russia with their accounts of *glasnost* and *perestroika*. As yet, no one has claimed to have left politics to spend more time with his family; but otherwise the will to conceal embarrassing facts has been similar.

Usually, as with Conservative ministers, it is when Politburo members are being least "political" that they reveal most. Off his guard in one of his more turgid chapters, Gorbachev's prime minister Nikolai Ryzhkov mentions that he could never confidently work out what was in Gorbachev's mind. Needless to add, this was a reason why Gorbachev prevailed over his associates. The mystery about him made him less easily attackable.

Among his allies, however, there was one figure about whom the ambiguities were nowhere as great. This was Alexander Yakovlev. His influence on Gorbachev was large enough for him to be popularly known as the father of *glasnost*. As early as 1988, when he was working in the Secretariat of the Party Central Committee, he was already telling his own subordinates: "It's time to say that Marxism was a utopia and a mistake from the very beginning."

Kremlin politicians knew what Yakovlev stood for, and he became the subject of vicious polemics. In summer 1990, as Gorbachev wilted under the barrage of assault on his policies, Yakovlev resigned from his entourage. He was unwilling to contemplate strategic retreat in the war for reform.

Yakovlev is a pudgy, beetle-browed figure acquainted with the history of Russian thought. Gorbachev knew gobbets of Lenin, but Yakovlev has read the canon of 19th- and 20th-century thinkers. He is also a guilt-ridden Russian intellectual. His book gives a vivid impression of the hurt he feels for his earlier involvement on the side of the oppressors against the oppressed. This is the Soviet equivalent of a Tolstoy or a Turgenev regretting his noble family background.

There is also an affability about the man. He could be brusque but, unlike Gorbachev, he did not lose his temper when unappreciated by his friends. His memoir, unlike the rest of them, reads less as an *apologia pro vita sua* than as a survey of communist unrealism in the 20th century. Tittle-tattle about his enemies is nobly absent.

This brings credit to Yakovlev, but limits us to only the occasional glimpse through the Kremlin keyhole. For example, he recalls that he wrote in a memo to Gorbachev as early as 1985 that the Soviet Communist Party should be split into two separate parties. How interesting it would be to have the text and to know Gorbachev's reaction. And in avoiding the personal temptations of his story, Yakovlev finds excessive abstraction irresistible. The language is altogether too Hegelian.

But the book is scintillating nevertheless. If it had come out before rather than after August 1991, it would have been a sensation. The very rumour that he was writing it in the late 1980s was held against him by anti-*perestroika* party officials. At that time he claimed that his book would offer a new vision of socialism for Russia. As his thought has evolved, it does little in this direction.

He castigates state authoritarianism and intolerance; he welcomes elections, pluralism and civil peace. But there is nothing uniquely socialist about this. When he writes about the need for "civilisation" and "a normal society", he says something Russian readers would intuitively understand but which sounds too vague to the English ear.

Even so, this is also a book that was evidently painful to write. It is a remarkable document of a remarkable period. Yeltsin has succeeded Gorbachev as the axial force in the politics of Russia. And yet, despite appearances, neither of them is a Titan.

Gorbachev was fortunate to have had a hero of the stature of Yakovlev. Yeltsin has his advisers on the current institutional, economic, ethnic and territorial questions, but he lacks a Yakovlev. Soon we shall learn whether this matters.

Robert Service is professor of Russian history and politics at London University

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Essex woman in the dock

THE TRIALS OF FRANCES HOWARD: FACT AND FICTION AT THE COURT OF KING JAMES
David Lindley
Routledge, £25

Diarmaid MacCulloch

Frances Howard was 13 when, in 1606, she married the 14-year-old Earl of Essex. It was part of a grand design to manufacture aristocratic family ties. The aim was a lasting peace at James I's court, after the murderous tensions of Queen Elizabeth's last years had led to Essex's father being executed for treason.

Predictably, the scheme failed. Husband and wife loathed each other to the point of physical revulsion. A divorce followed: a very occasional treat for scandal-lovers at the time, complete with lurid details of witchcraft and male impotence. Only three months after the divorce decree, Frances married King James' long-standing boyfriend Robert Carr, a wedding this time of real passion. The lavish court ceremony was the Jacobean equivalent of a white wedding, and poets were grateful for the employment.

So far, an experienced features editor on *Hello!* could have sanitised the couple. However, Carr's closest advisor, Sir Thomas Overbury, had bitterly opposed the marriage. Overbury was manoeuvred into offending the King and died while imprisoned in the Tower of London. Two years later, evidence emerged that Sir Thomas had been poisoned.

By now, Carr had lost his monopoly of the King's affections and he had no one to shield him. A series of trials climaxed in accusations of murder against Carr and his wife. Frances confessed; there was no definite evidence against Robert. They escaped execution and were eventually released from the Tower. In a chilling tailpiece, Frances' first husband, Essex, somehow obtained a copy of the post-mortem detailing her agonising death from cancer; it survives in his papers.

The tale is complex even in this summary. One could tell it with different emphases: court politics; the struggle to decide England's overseas alliances; the impact of a foreign king on the chauvinist English. One important avenue not explored by David Lindley is the fact that the Earl of Essex, humiliated and embittered by early Stuart England's greatest scandal, was later at the heart of the confrontation with James' son Charles that triggered the civil wars.

What fascinates Lindley, however, is the experience of the woman at the centre of the business: Frances Howard. Lindley presents her story in the structure of a masque; appropriately, because masques celebrated both Frances' weddings. Drawing on the literature generated by her life and its Jacobean literary parallels, he explains how prose writers, poets and playwrights interpreted female behaviour and how this distorted the portrayal of an unconventional woman.

Frances does well out of the reassessment. She broke many rules, and so she was unjustly pictured as breaking all the rules. Both at the time and by incurious later historians, she was seen as a wildly promiscuous monster, dabbling in witchcraft and alchemy. Significantly, both her husbands have enjoyed a better press: poor solemn Essex and the cheery and not very bright Robert Carr.

Lindley convincingly disposes of much of the wild sex in Frances' life, but he does not try very hard to exonerate her on the most serious charge of all, murder. She did, after all, plead guilty, faced with evidence that still impresses, even allowing for bias. She was no Judith Ward. This matters little. Lindley illuminates the general by the particular. By laying out for us the comment on one extraordinary woman, he sheds brilliant light on how all women were perceived in early modern England.

He frequently points to modern parallels in sexual stereotyping, but is fully aware that the past is another country, only properly visited by those who understand its rules. History and literature are not always successfully yoked together; this book shows what can be done when the attempt is blessed with clarity and good judgment.

Lost leader

ANEURIN BEVAN AND THE WORLD OF SOUTH WALES
Dai Smith
University of Wales Press, £12.95

Tony Heath

These are hard times for Valleys folk. The *raison d'être* underpinning communities once bonded by the institutions of working people has been whittled away. King Coal is dethroned and South Wales faces an uncertain future. The sole surviving deep mine, Tower Colliery—isolated by tortured geography at the head of the Cynon Valley—looks into the abyss as the shadow of an era dominated by the sub-Orwellian slogan "greed good, need bad" lengthens.

The landscape is being greened, and Pacific Rim entrepreneurs ride in waving government grants, just as blacklegs bussed in during the 1984-85 miners' strike flaunted fat pay cheques at the picket line. It was not always so. The 33 years since the death of Aneurin Bevan have witnessed many changes in the Valleys' economic and social fortunes. The further north you travel from Cardiff—a city rapidly being yuppified with avalanches of cash that could be better spent elsewhere—the more pronounced the change. At Tredegar, Bevan's birthplace, the contrast is stark. Bevan's ashes were scattered on the mountains above the town. Other sons and daughters of the sorely tried com-

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munity visit the lonely spot from time to time: pilgrims recalling days of greater hope.

Back in Tredegar, the library that was once dominated by a bust of the great man is a dusty shell. I spent hours there when I should have been at school. The surgery where Dr Trevor Bryant inspected my tonsils is now a snooker hall. The shattered train station looks like a Bosnian wayside halt. The Olympia cinema, outside which hundreds queued on rainy nights to wonder at Betty Grable, last did duty as a carpet warehouse. Such is the present state of Bevan's home town.

Dai Smith writes of different days, with the emotion of a man brought up in the Valleys and the discipline expected of a history professor at Cardiff University—a career he turned in a few weeks ago to become editor of BBC Radio Wales. He positions Bevan as perhaps the most important pivot in the culture of Wales this century. And he stresses Bevan's political skills, which spread far beyond the confines of the Principality.

Few who heard Bevan speak—whether to a heaving Trafalgar Square or in conversation in his cramped office over the chemist shop in Victoria Street—came away unmoved by the force of his intellect and the power of his reasoning. As time passes, those able to recount the experience are dwindling in number, but the memory remains clear.

Bevan's world was complex, and Smith carefully peels away layer after layer of an intriguing amalgam. He describes, for example, the famous 1905 rugby clash between Wales and New Zealand at Cardiff Arms Park—a seminal encounter still discussed in club rooms after the final whistle. Wales won by a single try after their opponents' equaliser was disallowed.

Smith also probes Raymond Williams' assessment of South Wales: a view taken from that culturally ill-defined border where Monmouthshire shades into Herefordshire. Williams' novel *Loyalties* traces left-wing activism from the Spanish civil war to the miners' strike. But radicalism is much reduced today, thanks to 13 years of Gradgrind Tory rule. It may sound optimistic but, as Smith suggests, the embers of past glories could just be coaxed into a warmer glow if a figure of Bevan's stature appeared. That is a faint hope, a straw to be clutched in the Valleys where Thatcher's "enemies within" cling on by their fingertips.

Early this century, Wales witnessed a population explosion as industry expanded at a frantic pace; the contraction is proving equally spectacular but its outcome has yet to unfold. Without an appreciation of the people's resilience, it is difficult to understand what gives the South Wales valleys their special place in the wider world. As educator, politician and, to many, messiah, Aneurin Bevan was the hub on which the wheel could start to turn again.

Holy warriors

THE FIRST JESUITS
John O'Malley
Harvard University Press, £27.50

Peter Stanford

Those worried for the future prospects of today's generation of young offenders can take comfort in the example of Ignatius of Loyola. The saintly founder of the Jesuits had a brush, as a wayward adolescent, with the courts on a charge of brawling in a public place. He was also, as John O'Malley delicately puts it, "indiscreet in his relationships with women" and escaped such entanglements by joining the army.

In spite of such an unholy start, however, Ignatius managed to go on to set up and lead the élite battalion of the Pope's many divisions. With their quasi-military organisation and emphasis on intellect, the Jesuits amassed great power behind the throne of St Peter. In the 17th century, they became embroiled in the politics of colonial expansion, a chapter in their history memorably recreated in *The Mission*. In 1773, Pope Clement XIV decided that Ignatius' successors had got too big for their birettas and banned the order. It was more than 40 years before it was born

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Power on the back benches?
The growth of select committee influence
Derek Hawes

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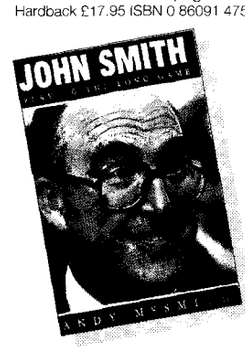

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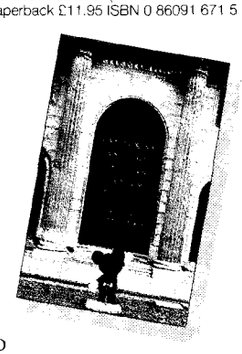

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again, more servile but never entirely under the Pope's thumb.

Many descriptions have been applied to the Jesuits down the ages. Their opponents have reviled them as devils for their part in the Inquisition and as the storm-troopers of the Counter-Reformation. Their admirers have revered them as saints. O'Malley attempts to sweep away the hyperbole and controversy to produce a balanced and honest account of the Jesuits' early years.

While recuperating from a leg wound after his escapade in the Spanish army, the distinctly unpious Ignatius whiled away the hours by reading the life of Christ. It was to be his road to Damascus. Once recovered, Ignatius joined forces with a group of young men who shared his enthusiasm for "helping souls". In 1540, they persuaded the Pope to give his blessing to the Society of Jesus.

The first Jesuits, O'Malley shows, had little idea about how they were going to proceed. Their unity and their energy came from two sources: Ignatius himself and the "spiritual exercises" he had designed. Ignatius remained, until his death in 1556, the heart and soul of the operation. Top of his original list of priorities was a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, but the Jesuits never quite got round to booking the tickets. Instead, they were diverted into good works and fell, almost by accident, into running schools and universities.

It was on this bedrock of education that they built their power and world influence. The Jesuits were the first religious order to see the classroom as an end in itself. Through their schools—unofficial motto "Give me a child of five and I'll show you the man"—the Jesuits have played a leading part in the moral and intellectual development of countless generations of Catholics around the globe.

Their continuing success in that role, when most of the orders that have tried to copy them have died out, owes much to the truly comprehensive nature of Ignatius' original vision. A Jesuit education, he decreed, was not the standard learning of the catechism by rote and wrapping every other lesson in a pious irrationality. He was strongly influenced by the growing humanist movement, and aimed at a curriculum that was both academic and pastoral and which embraced all subjects and all levels of ability.

Though he is himself a Jesuit, O'Malley never slips into hagiography or the sticky coyness of the Catholic Truth Society's "Lives of Saints" that you find in the church-porch bookstalls. Ignatius could be bossy, overbearing and insensitive. He was often wrong. His *Spiritual Exercises* are written in a style that "fails to entice".

Yet if anything was going to encourage me to read Ignatius' heartfelt outpourings, it is O'Malley's picture of their author. He is convinced that the *Spiritual Exercises* are the core of a vision that continues to inspire the cream of successive generations to join an order that remains one of the few beacons of hope and free thought in a divided church.

Peter Stanford was editor of the "Catholic Herald"

Cold war histories

Bull about the bear

Phil Edwards

During the 1980s, the left tried and ultimately failed to commit the Labour Party to a non-nuclear defence policy—a struggle minutely, if uncomprehendingly, documented in **Dan Keohane**'s Natopolitan survey of *Labour Party Defence Policy Since 1945* (Leicester University Press, £35). Some of us, concerned with nuclear disarmament on a European scale, criticised this focus on one British party. Wasn't it a bit, well *insular*? In fact, the barriers to a non-nuclear policy within the Labour Party went to the heart of cold-war politics. As Keohane reminds us, this was the party that was "prominent at the creation of the Nato alliance" and, he might have added, at the creation of the cold war.

John Saville's *The Politics of Continuity: British foreign policy and the Labour government, 1945-51* (Verso, £34.95) traces the joint development of postwar foreign policy and the ideology of the cold war. Saville shows how the Foreign Office programme Labour inherited—commitment to the Empire, hostility to communism—was gradually modified. Anti-communism displaced the Empire in the context of Britain's unequal alliance with the US. The result was a new and powerful ideology, deriving much of its force from its supposed left-wing character.

The process can be traced in Clement Attlee's interventions in foreign policy. Between 1945 and 1947, Attlee tried repeatedly to limit Britain's involvement in the eastern Mediterranean and temper hostility to Soviet influence in the area.

Tipped off by the Foreign Office, the chiefs of staff answered his proposals "in their usual style of fighting the next war in terms of the one just finished". A presence in Somalia, for instance, was essential as it was "on the short sea route to India". Attlee pointed out gently that "the position of India is changing".

Anti-Soviet arguments predominated. Attlee's comment that "it is difficult to tell how far Russian policy is dictated by expansionism and how far by fear of attack" hit a wall of dogma. To quote the jottings of Bevin's PPS, "even if Russian world domination can be discounted, bear will certainly not resist pushing paw into soft places."

Although he was genuinely committed to dialogue with the USSR, Attlee's prime concern was for a foreign policy to fit Britain's reduced international circumstances. Not only was Britain's military spending unsustainable; both Marshall Aid and the nuclear weapons programme had effectively subordinated Britain to the US. Attlee even suggested redefining Britain as "the easterly extension of a strategic area the centre of which is the American continent": a typically

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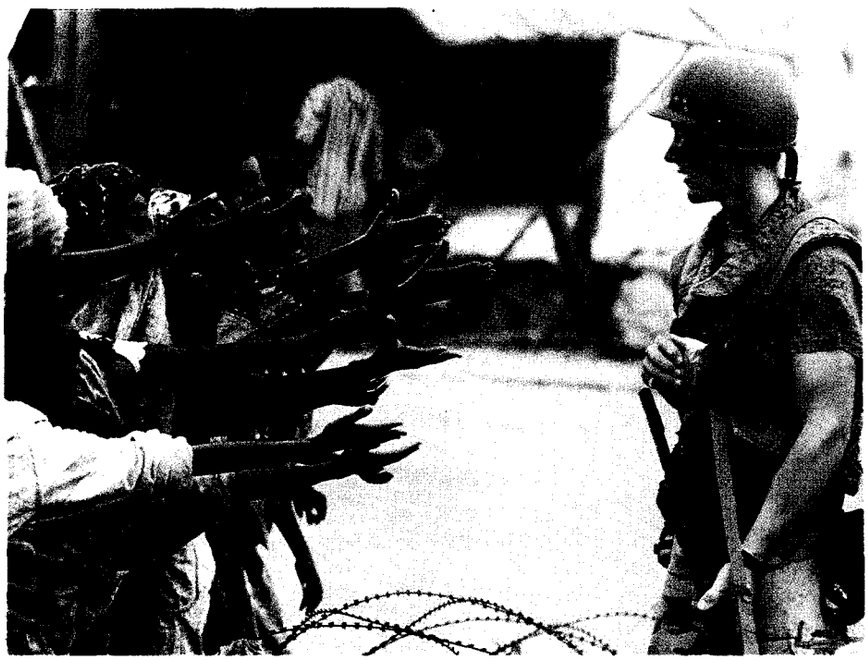

The newest world order: Hansi Krauss' picture of Somali children begging sweets from a UN soldier. Krauss, Hos Maina and Dan Eldon were killed in Mogadishu in July: "Images of Conflict" (AP/Reuters, £9.95) is a memorial album of their war photography

frank statement of the Atlanticist strand in Labour's future foreign policy.

Another strand was personified by Ernest Bevin. To Bevin the union boss, communists represented extremism and insubordinacy; for Bevin the foreign secretary, the same was true of the USSR. "You have built up the Soviet Union and you have a right to defend it; I have built up the Transport Union and if you seek to break it I will fight you": thus Bevin to the Soviet ambassador. Added to his truculent patriotism ("I'm not going to have Britain barged about," he said at Potsdam) this made for a foreign secretary harder on communism than his Tory predecessor.

The final, crucial element of Labour's post-war foreign policy was its packaging. Britain under Labour, it was argued, was neither communist nor capitalist, but social democratic: likewise its foreign policy. Britain was "the last bastion of social democracy", according to Bevin, and *therefore* we must stand up to the Russians: "Any weakening of our position in the Mediterranean will, in my view, lead to the end of social-democracy there." Meaningless as it was, the "social democratic" gloss gave a new vigour and sophistication to the arguments of Atlanticist anti-communism.

The resultant hybrid has set the tone for Labour policy to the present, apart from a few years in the 1980s. (Even then, as Keohane records, its advocates had trouble assuming "the role previously occupied by the left": *accepting party policy and shutting up.*

Labour's cold war was also fought on the ground, in a series of interventions around the world—often against the communists who had led wartime resistance. Saville documents one little-known episode, in which the Vietnamese republic declared by Ho Chi Minh in 1945 was dissolved by a British commander using Japanese troops.

The gravity and stupidity of Britain's similar intervention in Greece is illustrated by **Mark Mazower**'s *Inside Hitler's Greece: the experience of occupation, 1941-1944* (Yale University Press, £19.95): an excellent study of the social conditions of the Greek resistance. In Greece as in Yugoslavia, a communist-led resistance movement (ELAS) coexisted with a number of non-communist groups, often prone to collaboration. Predictably, British assistance went primarily to the latter: a policy that was ultimately reversed in Yugoslavia, but in Greece lasted throughout the war and beyond. The result was civil war, effectively initiated by Britain.

The Greek civil war lasted until 1949, by which time the US had taken Britain's place; the last of a series of authoritarian regimes fell in 1974. And yet, as Mazower demonstrates, there was never a "communist threat" in Greece. Stalin's advice to ELAS was to moderate their politics, link with other groups and keep in with the British. An ELAS regime might have been no more democratic than Tito's Yugoslavia, but it would have been no more of a threat to the free world.

This is the irony of the cold war. Saville quotes Denis Healey: "Like most western observers at this time, I believed that Stalin's behaviour showed that he was bent on the military conquest of western Europe. I now think we were all mistaken." And mistaken they all stayed for over 40 years: a period that Nato apologists such as Keohane now seek to prolong with talk of "a new set of potential threats" from Ukraine and Azerbaijan. Even anti-communism is providing a surprisingly hardy strain: witness western reaction to the Yeltsin coup. The cold war was a nightmare from which some still don't want to awake.

PRINTOUT

Big issues

Boyd Tonkin

At the launch of National Library Week, I met a genuine tabloid myth: a senior librarian who didn't much care for Trollope, but really enjoyed lesbian feminist thrillers. I might consider revealing the identity of this walking headline to Murdoch newshounds (from the TLS, perhaps) on payment of a huge, Thatcher-type fee to the Library Campaign at 1-5 Bath Street, London EC1. Other readers should give to the campaign anyway. It not only resists the erosion of hours and budgets but also has by far the pithiest slogan for this week's jamboree: "Cut libraries and see wot hapens".

The recent Comedia report "Borrowed Time" (discussed here on 2 July) laid bare the damage done to library funds by a decade of Westminster malice and sporadic town-hall idiocy. Still, it's shocking to learn from the Library Association, which organised this week's events, that the number of English libraries open for six full days (60 hours) each week has dropped by 90 per cent since 1975, to a mere 18. Ross Shimmon, the association's chief executive, now believes that some councils fail to offer the "comprehensive and efficient" library service required of them by law.

In spite of, or because of, these money worries, the Week's activities have uncorked a stream of nostalgic twaddle that sounds like Alan Bennett off-cuts ("Every Saturday, our dad took uz down to t'Andrew Carnegie. I'd pick up a couple of Kants, with some Gibbon for light relief, and climb up a slag heap to read till t'gas lamps came on . . ."). But don't start from the good old things, said Brecht; start from the bad new ones. Well, the nasty novelty most relevant to the library's future is surely the imminent arrival of discount sheds in darkest Essex.

For the up-side of the 1980s was the success of some flagship libraries as the cornerstones of urban renewal. Tomorrow, for instance, Croydon Corporation will open its "future-proof" main library as the core of a £30-million cultural complex. Attractive town-centre libraries can keep alive a public space within the market. They are often versatile enough to transcend the sterile division between advocates of books alone and partisans of the multi-media warehouse.

Urban purists tend to despise the mall and the precinct. But there, at least, the hope of a democratic forum can survive. With smart libraries at their heart, those who come to shop may stay to browse. The rapid spread of out-of-town consumption would wreck that opportunity. And so, of course, would the total immersion of libraries in the retail culture—as the result, say, of compulsory tendering and "franchise" arrangements. So it may be that the best stance for libraries to adopt in the marketplace resembles the traditional Christian attitude to the material world. They should be in it, but not of it.

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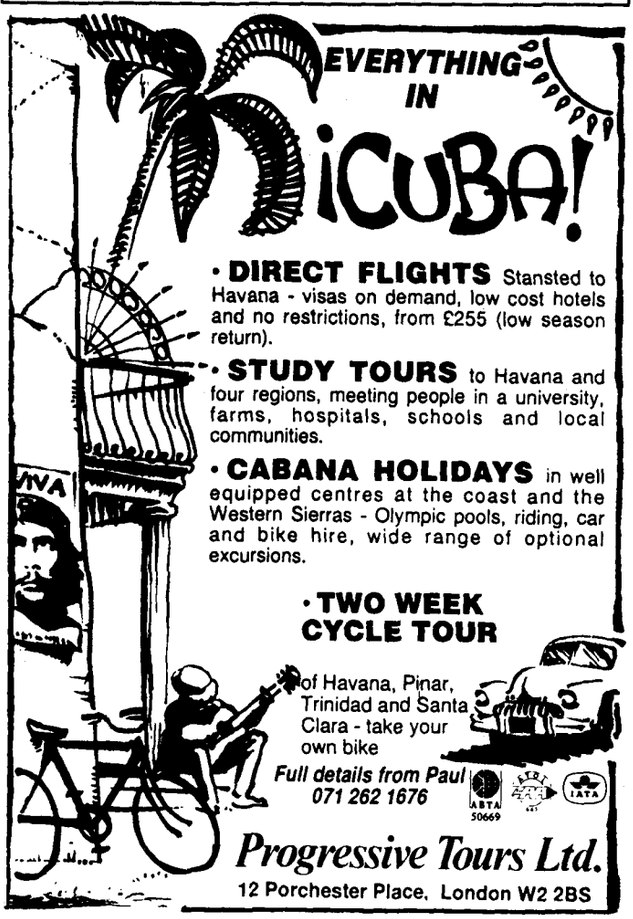
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NEW STATESMAN & SOCIETY

5 November 1993 Vol 6 No 277
New Statesman Vol 122 No 4159
New Society Vol 89 No 1600

ISSN 0954-2361
Incorporating "Marxism Today", "The Nation", "The Athenaeum", and the "Week-end Review"

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Foundation House
Perseverance Works
38 Kingsland Road
London E2 8DQ
Fax 071-739 9307
Advertising 071-739 1645
Editorial/Administration 071-739 3211

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Syndication/Permissions: Cover Stories, The Guardian, 119 Farringdon Road, London EC1. Tel: 071-278 2332. Fax: 071-837 1192.

New Statesman & Society (ISSN 0954-2361 USPS 382260) is published weekly for US$120 per year by Statesman and Nation Publishing Company Ltd and Contributors, Foundation House, Perseverance Works, 38 Kingsland Road, London E2 8DQ, UK. Second-class postage paid at Middlesex, NJ, USA. Postmaster: send address changes to New Statesman & Society, c/o C & C Mailers International Inc, 900 Lincoln Boulevard, P O Box 177, Middlesex, NJ 08846, USA.

Registered as a newspaper.
Colour originated by Filmwork
Postscript Output by Image Setting Ltd, 1b Berry Place, Sebastian St, London EC1V OJD (Tel: 071-253 0437)
Printed by BPCC Magazines (Colchester) (Tel: 851665)
Distribution by COMAG, Tavistock Rd, West Drayton, Middx UB7 7QE (Tel: 0895 444055).

16mm and 35mm microfilms, 105mm microfiche and article copies are available through University Microfilms Inc, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106, USA

ENDGAMES: Weekend Competition

No 3301 Set by Tim Hopkins
You were asked for apposite anagrams of MPs' names

Report by Ms de Meaner
First I have to report, as Jim Grozier and Sally Masson pointed out in their warning letter, that lots of you came up with the same results. All would have been well if none of these had won, but irritatingly some did. The route we took out of this poser was to put the names in a hat and have a raffle. So, no letters of complaint please, if it wasn't your name that got picked.

This must be one of the most exciting moments of the Weekend Competition's life: I believe that machine intelligence has entered for the first time. Of course, I may be wrong. But the 1,000-plus entries from one Mark Wiggin, to laser-printer standard, incline some among us to the view that the software exists that can create a number of proper words out of letters fed in. For example, the 98 versions of Theresa Gorman's name (misspelt, note) contain gems like: "Hate germ arson", "Her name-tags or", "North meagre as" and "Ha! Mega snot err". Now, out of the 98, 25 were marked with a red felt-tip. But are these the leading contenders? The rejects? Or simply doodles? Admittedly, none of the above made the shortlist, which seems to show some human intelligence at work here. However, I'm not absolutely sure what the ruling should be, since no judge has ever before been confronted with this sort of problem.

In the end, the judge's opinion —mine, actually—is that Wiggin has brought the whole thing on himself by making his *modus operandi* so obvious. Why could the wretched man not have simply sent in his top 30 or whatever, and no one would have been any the wiser? Since, of course, virtually every single winning entry on this page also appears on Wiggin's complete list, there seemed little point in putting his name into the hat with all the others who had sent in the same entry. In the interest of fairness, as well as reader enjoyment, I decided that only those that were a) marked in red felt-tip, b) not sent in by anyone else, and c) amusing should grace these pages. This narrowed it down to one.

I'm sadly aware that the good old days of the plucky amateur may have died for ever.

A question on the "apposite" bit of the instructions. To the person who sent in *"Tony Blair:* Not by rail", what do you know that the Labour Party doesn't? A fiver for each winning entry, and a special thanks to the computer.

David Mellor: Old devil ram
George Rees

Michael Portillo: I'll to PM chair —Olé!
David Toley

Michael Portillo: Ol' Mr Paleolithic
Peter Mandelson: Damn tele-person
Kevin McNamara: Man an' maverick
Tim Moorey

Norman Lamont: Not normal man
John Smith: Shhit on JM
Stephen Norris: Repents 'is horn
Paul Weeks

Virginia Bottomley: My bite too virginal
Tam Dalyell: Lad may tell
Katie Mallett

Michael Heseltine: Hee, I'll cheat mines
Sid Field

Cecil Parkinson: Is no prick clean?
Anna Classey

Teresa Gorman: Great man-sore
Neil Kinnock: Knock Lenin? I?
Margaret Rogers

Ken Livingstone: Votes Lenin king
Teresa Gorman: Go! Men are rats!
Stuart Bell: Utter balls
Noel Petty

David Mellor: Dildo marvel
Mark Wiggin

Tony Blair: I rat nobly
Nick Wray

Ken Clarke: Le Knacker
Peter Norman

GRYPH'S QUIZ

The answers all have something in common

1. Large marmot
2. Absinthe flavouring
3. Rupert's home
4. Besiegers' stratagem
5. Socialist youth organisation
6. Dryad
7. Promenade conductor
8. Song from *GI Blues*
9. Hood's hideout
10. Land-dwelling crustacean

Answers below

Sir Edward Heath: Has weird hatred
Tony Blair: Tory in Lab
Rev Ian Paisley: Yep! IRA is venal
Dennis Skinner: Inner kindness
Chris Packer

Chancellor Kenneth Clarke: Check rank—he'll clear No Ten
The Rt Hon Michael Howard MP: He who hath trampl'd on crime
James Mortleman
(or Let's jam more, man)

Sir David Steel MP: Limited SDP saver
Michael Mates: Cheat mails me
Robin Oakley-Hill

David Mellor: Dim lover lad
D A Prince

Virginia Bottomley: Vile minatory bigot
K G McBeath

Norman Fowler: Non-feral worm
Philip Dacre

No 3304 Set by Margaret Rogers
We are constantly told to avoid clichés. Send in a short story (250 words max by 18 November) where clichés are justified. Where, for example, the "suburb" actually *is* "leafy", and the leaves play a significant part in the plot.

Quiz answers

All involve "wood": 1) Woodchuck; 2) Wormwood; 3) Nutwood; 4) Wooden Horse; 5) Woodcraft Folk; 6) Wood-nymph; 7) Henry Wood; 8) Wooden Hearr; 9) Sherwood forest; 10) Woodlouse

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"Desert Island Discs — 2"

Copies of the *Collins Concise English Dictionary* for the first three correct entries opened. Entries to Salamanca 201, New Statesman & Society, Foundation House, Perseverance Works, 38 Kingsland Road, London E2 8DQ, by Monday 15 November.

The selected records (a Guinness may help with the popular titles) and the other choices provide broad or fine hints to the identity of the guest whose name solvers should include with their entries. (One simple abbreviation is used in the answers to normal clues.)
Records: Chopin's "1Ac. 26" (3 words)
"28 2" (2 words)
"The 39" (4 words)
"32D 14 16" (4 words)
Book: "The 17 of *the shaded squares upwards*"
Luxury: 36

ACROSS
11 Identity of celebrity, one among the men who are unusual (4)
12 A foreigner from the ghastly Nazi era (7)
13 Old s-song (out of time), a singular one (6)
18 Fly with the King in an old song (4)
20 Song from Essex: ardent follower of mine will put one out (7)
21 Excellent art eg, displayed (5)
23 Some shared experience in tale of old (4)
25 Blooming hopeful, very large in lines (4)
27 A load of fish that are silent circle a lake (5)
30 Where sleeve goes (that's the old style) (4)
31 Part of a forceful nature? (4)
32 Settlement made inside company? (8)
37 The opposite of Caesar, J? (7)
38 Plant: I found one planted in the street? (4)

DOWN
3 Chief of eastern community (4)
4 Sloppy secretary i' pen, lacking in care, sadly, does this? (7)
5 Loaf: Some lazy men's (4) . . .
6 . . . bearing shows signs of it in *them* (4)
7 A supporting strap one's erected — to hold canopy on this? (5)
8 A person of the cloth, say, to give Jock back his status (6)
9 Examination at end of course: one won't fail if a worker! (3)
10 Chest: one with bad one we hear (6)
15 Hello! Here's this hard, woody, twisted old Japanese plant! (10)
19 Test score (3)
20 Dandy male, for instance, attracting female (6)
22 Wild old bitch I restrain (7)
23 Prince, for instance, before being King (3)
24 Quits, and nothing added, nevertheless (2 words, 6)
29 Monkey you'll see move in tangled vegetation (5)
33 Optical defect: it can be seen in telescope (pointed at space?) (4)
34 Spores in clusters not pens, perhaps (4)
35 Punch, by Jove, no beers? (3)

Prizewinners for Salamanca 199 (solution below)

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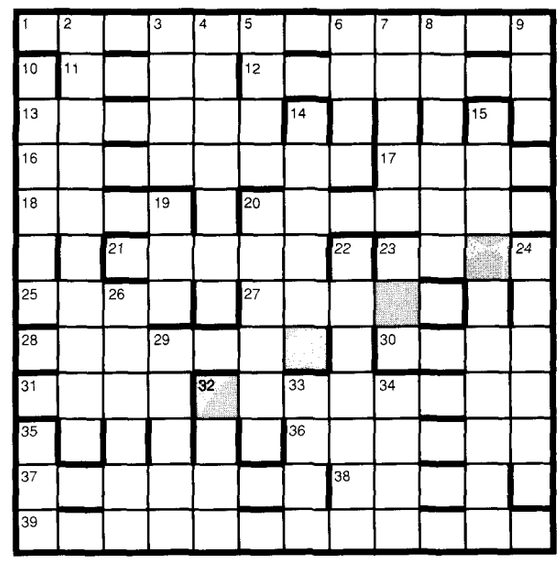
199



Guest: _____

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BACKCHAT

Mat Coward on how a two-piece Burton's suit could have changed the editor's life

Always wear a suit if you want to keep your thumbs in one piece: that's my advice. This wisdom, which I learned in battle long ago, came back to me when considering the editor's recent account of having his thumb broken by a rioting cop on an Anti-Nazi demonstration. In a flash, I remembered a similar, though much smaller, situation in 1978, when I took part in a protest against the National Front laying a wreath at the Cenotaph on Remembrance Day.

On that occasion, too, the police employed the tactic of using horses to trap demonstrators in a confined space, their own body mass then being used to crush them. Those who tried to surrender—that is, to abandon the mob in search of a pub—were physically prevented from leaving. The police had come prepared for a fight, and they made certain they got one.

But on that day of enlightenment, as I bobbed and swayed unhappily in the crowd, I saw something that changed my life. I saw a youngish man, dressed as if for a City office, walk casually up to the police lines—and pass straight through them, unhindered.

From the noise that arose around me, it was clear that some interpreted his ease of exit as evidence that he was an *agent provocateur*, on his way to report a day's mischief to his superiors at MI5. I, however, was immediately possessed of a quite different theory; like many a warrior before, I knew that I had witnessed the invention of camouflage. I had seen the future, and it was invisible.

From then on, I rarely engaged in subversive rough and tumble attired in anything less soothing to the subconscious prejudices of the law than a sports jacket and flannel slacks. I affected brogues, and a junior banker's haircut.

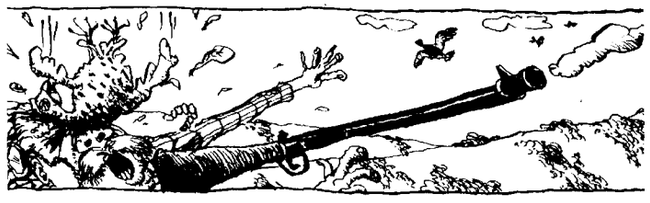
I adopted a rigorously scientific approach to my sartorial researches. On every picket, dressed in my two-piece suit of Burton's armour, I would seek out the ugliest, angriest wildman available, and brazenly stand next to him as he screamed his abusive war-cries, and wielded his placard like a scimitar. And when the snatch squads came dashing in, to drag him away without ever glancing at me, I would smile the secretive smile of the vindicated vivisector.

Follow my lead, I urge you, but be cautious. It's important not to overdo the costume (spats, watch on a chain, regimental tie, that sort of thing), because if the police sense that you are consciously dressing the part, they will instinctively identify you as something even worse than a leftie troublemaker—a performer of street theatre. They will then give you a very good kicking indeed, and what's more, most decent people will cheer them on as they do so.

Apology

In my column on 23 July, I referred to the tragic death of a 15-year-old boy under the wheels of a horse box. It was not my intention to suggest that the driver of the horse box deliberately ran the boy down. At the Inquest into the boy's death, the coroner said that the boy was the author of his own misfortune, and criticised those who had incited him and transported him to the scene of the accident. I apologise to the driver of the horse box for the distress that he has suffered as a result of readers of my column having interpreted my words as blaming him for the boy's death. The editor of *New Statesman & Society* endorses these remarks on behalf of the paper.

FORTEANA



Paul Sieveking on how to be a zombie, floating, glassy-eyed, over one's body

For many nights last spring, crowds gathered in a Port-au-Prince football field to hear André Ville Jean-Paul tell how he was buried alive and then resurrected from the grave as one of Haiti's legendary "living dead". Within days of his debut, M Jean-Paul became such a sensation that Haitian security forces—quick to crush any large gatherings in case they erupted into revolt against the military—forced the zombie's handlers to shuttle him from slum to slum; but the precautions only spread his fame.

A reporter seeking a private audience with M Jean-Paul one morning had to elude about 50 people who spotted him and yelled "The zombie is here!" M Jean-Paul jumped into his visitor's rental car and was quickly driven into the labyrinthine streets of the Port-au-Prince slum of Cité Soleil, leaving behind dozens of outstretched hands. It is considered good luck to touch a zombie.

Zombies are allegedly created by secret voodoo cults, or *bizango*, as punishment for social transgressions ranging from adultery to land theft. It is not the fear of zombies that concerns Haitians, but the fear of becoming one. The *bizango* are viewed as aberrant by the mainstream voodoo majority.

Wade Davis, author of *The Serpent and the Rainbow* (1986), obtained samples of *coup poudre* (zombie powder), which he found contained tetrodotoxin, a powerful nerve toxin about 500 times stronger than cyanide, and can be got from readily obtainable puffer fish (*Diodon hystrix* and *Sphoerides testudineus*), known as tetrodons because of their characteristic four teeth. The toxin produces a profound paralysis closely resembling death.

The after-effects, should the victim survive, closely parallel those suffered by the zombies whom the author observed and interviewed. There is the sense of floating above one's body, glassy eyes, respiratory distress, hypersalivation, a weak pulse and blueness of the skin due to impaired circulation. The act of "zombification" was punished with a life sentence in March 1989. This was the first time in Haitian history that the taboo subject had been dealt with officially.

M Jean-Paul said he was 17 and engaged to be married in the town of Mirebalais when he came under the control of a zombie cult. He didn't know how old he was, because he didn't know how long he spent in a zombie trance. Voodoo cultists intervened sometime after he suffered an epileptiform seizure that his family mistook for death. He said he felt his soul spiral into a lonely void. He was buried in a casket for a period he estimated at two weeks.

"It was very hot," he said. "I was hungry. It was dirty." Then the coffin began to rise through the earth "as if it was under another's power". Voices ordered him, three times, to rise from the casket. Once he was outside, he was beaten and marked with a knife in a manner that he says made it impossible for him ever to make love again. His abrupt and unsolicited display of the mutilation ended when the owner of the chic bistro where the zombie and his audience were sitting rushed over and demanded that he pull up his trousers.

After his mutilation, the cultists sold him to a *houngan*, or voodoo priest, and he was put to work in the rice fields with 18 other zombies. They slaved in the nude, supervised by a dwarf zombie wearing a tinkling belt of bells around his waist. They were fuelled by a steady diet of moonshine liquor, rice, biscuits, bananas, charcoal and meat they were told was human flesh.

After an undetermined number of years, one of the zombies went berserk and beat the master to death, breaking the spell of their servitude. M Jean-Paul said he regretted that the prime of his life was spent in psychic leprosy, but he was not bitter. "I'm sorry the voodoo man is dead, even though he beat us like children," he said.

Sources: "New Scientist", 7 August 1986; "Calgary Herald", 19 April 1991; "Atlanta Journal", 16 May 1993

Paul Sieveking is editor of "Fortean Times"

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